GREAT BRITAIN AND THE CONGO

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

AFFAIRS OF WEST AFRICA

THE BRITISH CASE IN FRENCH CONGO

KING LEOPOLD'S RULE IN AFRICA

RED RUBBER

GREAT BRITAIN

AND

THE CONGO

THE PILLAGE OF THE CONGO BASIN

BY

E. D. MOREL

HON. SECRETARY OF THE CONGO REFORM ASSOCIATION;
JOINT PRESIDENT, WITH PIERRE MILLE (FRANCE), EMILE VANDERVELDE (BELGIUM),
AND DR. STANLEY HALL (UNITED STATES), OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE
FOR THE DEFENCE OF THE NATIVES IN THE CONVENTIONAL BASIN
OF THE CONGO, OF WHICH M. RENÉ CLAPARÈDE, PRESIDENT
OF THE SWISS LEAGUE, IS THE HON. SECRETARY;
EDITOR OF THE *AFRICAN MAIL*

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

SIR A. CONAN DOYLE

LONDON

SMITH, ELDER & CO., 15, WATERLOO PLACE

1909

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WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,
LONDON AND BECCLES.

TO HER

WHOSE STEADFAST COURAGE
AND UNSWERVING FAITH HAVE
MADE IT POSSIBLE

"Auferre, trucidare, rapere falsis nominibus imperium, atque ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant."—TACITUS, *Agricola*, CXXX.

"What they, by a misuse of terms, style Government, is a system of pillage, murder and robbery, and their so-called peace is a desert of their own creation."

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INTRODUCTION

WHOEVER desires to master the Congo question must go to Mr. Morel for his facts, for there is no one, official or unofficial, British or foreign, who has devoted to it the same time or thought. For nine years he has given his life to the investigation and the exposure of this huge international scandal. If it has ever been laid bare before the world it is to him above all men that it is due. It has been a weary, thankless task, in which ceaseless calumny has been the main weapon of his opponents. For years he has been depicted in the Continental Press as a man who stood as the spokesman of a clique of Liverpool merchants, or as one who schemed in favour of Protestant missions or of British territorial expansion. But those who know him are aware that the one driving force which has enabled him to remain constant to his purpose has been the hot indignation which he has felt at cruel deeds, and the keen sense of injustice which has been aroused in his generous mind by the iniquitous treatment of the native population of the Congo. Neither Wilberforce nor any of those men whose names we honour as the protagonists

in the fight against the slave trade have been actuated by nobler motives or have fought harder for the faith that was in them.

How great the scandal has been against which he has contended will be appreciated by those who read this volume. But for others who would have a fuller view of the inner workings of the Congo State, the same author's *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* * should be consulted. The two volumes together form in my opinion the most terrific indictment against a man and against a system which has ever been drawn up. Incidentally they cast a strange light upon the real value of those sonorous words Christianity and civilisation. What are they really worth in practice when all the Christian and civilised nations of the earth can stand round, and either from petty jealousy or from absolute moral indifference can for many years on end see a helpless race, whose safety they have guaranteed, robbed, debauched, mutilated, and murdered, without raising a hand or in most cases even a voice to protect them? Be the future what it may, the past history of the Berlin Treaty and its neglect by those who signed it is a shameful and humiliating episode. Is it still to continue? That is the question which those who read this book must answer.

The student may search history to find any parallel to the crime which has been committed

* Heinemann, 1904.

under our eyes on the Congo. There have been great expropriations in the past. There have been terrible and wholesale massacres. But where do you get such a combination of the two as in the Congo? In all historical expropriations the victors have pushed the vanquished from their lands in order themselves to occupy them. The country has flourished though the owners have changed. But here, for the sake of one scheming mind with a few millionaire subordinates and a handful of shareholders, the vast country has been seized by absentees, and the whole products exported on the plea that the land and everything upon it belongs to those who have never seen it. They have not traded in the Congo. They have sacked it and sell their loot in the Antwerp market. And by what right? By the right, they say, that we gave them in Berlin in 1885. If it is not by that right then it is by no right at all, since no other regulation exists by which their presence in Africa is justified. But did we really give them any such right? Did we permit them to monopolise the soil and all that walked or grew thereon? We turn to the Act and we read, "No Power . . . shall be allowed to grant therein either monopoly or privilege of any kind in commercial matters." Could words be clearer than that? And yet for nearly twenty years the nations of the earth have looked on with hardly a protest at this monstrous theft, as gross to-day under Belgian rule as ever it

was when the Congo was nominally an independent State. Why should any State ever keep any treaty if this is to pass unchallenged?

But there is the darker side of the question. There is the incredibly brutal treatment of the natives, which passed for some years because men could not bring themselves to believe that in this age of progress it was possible that such things could actually exist. All the cruelties of Alva in the Lowlands, all the tortures of the Inquisition, all the savagery of the Spanish to the Caribs are as child's play compared with the deeds of the Belgians in the Congo. Let those who think this an exaggerated statement read *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* and then try to justify their view. What form of outrage and torture is there which lust and brutality could devise which has not been let loose upon these helpless, unarmed people? Consider the huge area over which these deeds have been done, an area as large as Europe without Russia. Yet from every part of it, from the Lado Enclave, from the Katanga, from the Kasai country, from points two thousand miles apart, comes exactly the same tale of systematic bloodshed. "Systematic," that is the horror of it. Brutal men and brutal deeds are common, alas, in all tropical lands. The restraint of them comes from above. But here it is the call to brutality which comes from above; the urgent call for rubber, more rubber, higher dividends, at any

price of native labour and native coercion, driving the local agents on to torture and murder—that is the peculiarity of the Congo Administration. No wonder, then, that for all the thousands and tens of thousands of murders which have been done in that country not one white man has ever yet been executed. Only one European was ever hanged on the Congo, and that was the Englishman Stokes, who was put to death for trying to trade as he had every right to do. Had his murder marked, as it should have done, the downfall of this nightmare State, then what a world of suffering, what years of disgrace, would have been saved.

But when we read of the ill-treatment of these poor people, the horrible beatings, the mutilation of limbs, the butt-endings, the starving in hostage-houses—facts which are vouched for by witnesses of several nations and professions, backed by the incorruptible evidence of the Kodak—we again ask by what right are these things done? Is there anywhere any shadow of justification for the hard yoke which these helpless folk endure? Again we turn to the Treaty which regulates the situation. "All the Powers . . . pledge themselves to watch over the preservation of the native populations and the improvement of their moral and material conditions of existence." And this pledge is headed, "In the name of Almighty God." It still stands. It has never been rescinded.

What a story! What possible compensation can Europe ever make to these unhappy wards whom she has abandoned to what a Belgian judge from the Congo has described as the "most relentless and most hateful tyrants that have ever disgraced the name of humanity!" Europe may well cringe with shame before her own record!

The expropriation has been unique. The massacres have been unique. But there is another element which adds a last grotesque touch to this horror. It is the words of piety and philanthropy, the odious sustained hypocrisy which have cloaked these dreadful deeds. This perhaps is the most deadly of all the many evils which has arisen from Leopold's mission to Africa. It has flashed false coin so shamelessly before the world that the value of true coin has been for ever debased. The cynic has been justified. The true man has been put to shame. When again will powers for humanitarian ends be placed in any man's hands after such a world-lesson as that?

The past we cannot change. But how much longer are we to be deaf to the call of duty and humanity? How heavy already is our responsibility can only be appreciated by those who listen to Mr. Morel. Had Governments listened to him in the past the world would have been the better.

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

WINDLESHAM,
CROWBOROUGH,
September, 1909.

FOREWORD

The primary object of this book is to convey a conviction. The conviction that Britain cannot afford—from whatever aspect the matter is approached—to be beaten in the struggle against the Slave-System set up in the Congo by King Leopold as autocratic Sovereign of the "Congo Free State," and now being continued by King Leopold II. as constitutional Monarch of Belgium with the support of his constitutional ministers.

It is an attempt to bring home to the public what the present state of the Congo question is, and how that state has been reached, and to show that Britain *will be* beaten, unless the national will is immediately expressed in a manner which must finally break down the obstacles barring the way to victory. That is its primary object. The book has another purpose. To render intelligible, if haply that may be its effect, to all men, the far-reaching character of this struggle.

To make it clear that the issue is not merely concerned with securing good government for the present generation of Congo natives, but with

saving the great equatorial region of Africa from utter destruction.

To prove, not only by appealing to the instincts of humanity but, by the presentation of an unshakable array of arguments and admitted facts, to calm and reasoned judgment; that the various forms of slave trading which have desolated Central Africa in the past, fade into insignificance beside the annihilating System which has superseded them, and that such a state of affairs is inimical to the general interests of contemporary civilisation.

I cling, despite all, to the belief that were this absolute and astounding truth thoroughly grasped, in the immensity of its horror, in its unspeakable shame and folly; not all the concentrated forces of active evil, the deadly compromises of diplomacy and the paralysing influences of indifference and moral flabbiness, would be successful in stemming the demand for justice and redress.

I would like to venture here a word of heartfelt thanks, not only to those with whom it has been my privilege to be associated in this country, and who have extended to me a generous confidence never to be forgotten while life lasts, but also to my co-workers in other lands. As regards the latter I would desire, if, indeed, I may make bold to do so, to express my sense of admiration and of gratitude, to Dr. Thomas Barbour and Mr. John Daniels of Boston, M. Pierre Mille and M. Felicien Challaye of Paris, M. Emile Vandervelde

and M. Georges Lorand of Brussels, M. René Claparède of Geneva, my learned and venerable friend Dr. H. Christ-Socin of Basle, Herr Ludwig Deuss of Hamburg, and Consul Ernst Vohsen of Berlin. In every case their stand for right and justice has been taken in the face of peculiar difficulties and great obstacles, and the sacrifice has been a very real one. Their action proves that in every land men are to be found, prepared, when they know the facts, to throw themselves in the scale against organised iniquity, the forces of corruption, and the criminal apathy of Governments, and to do the work which those in executive authority have left undone.

E. D. MOREL.

CORPUS DELICTI

Extracts from the Declarations exchanged between the Government of Her Britannic Majesty and the International Association of the Congo on December 16, 1884 (afterwards the "Congo Free State," annexed on August 20, 1908, by Belgium).

DECLARATION OF THE ASSOCIATION.

"The International Association of the Congo, founded by His Majesty the King of the Belgians for the Purpose of promoting the civilisation and commerce of Africa and for other humane and benevolent purposes, hereby declares . . ."

DECLARATION OF HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT.

"The Government of Her Britannic Majesty declare their sympathy with, and approval of, the humane and benevolent purposes of the Association, and hereby recognise the flag of the Association . . . as the flag of a friendly Government."

Extract from Article X of the Convention between Her Britannic Majesty's Government and the International Association of the Congo on 16*th December*, 1884.

"In case of the Association being desirous to cede any portion of the territory now or hereafter

under its government, it shall not cede it otherwise than as subject to all the engagements contracted by the Association under this Convention. Those engagements and the rights thereby accorded to British subjects shall continue to be in vigour after every cession made to any new occupant of any portion of the said territory."

The action of the Corporation of London in 1885. Minutes of the proceedings of the Common Council of the City of London.

"April 30, 1895. The Lord Mayor informed the Court that a notice of motion in reference to the presentation of an address to His Majesty the King of the Belgians having been communicated to his Lordship, and, in accordance with the standing order, the terms of such notice having been considered in committee of the whole Court, he has been requested to submit such notice to the Court this day. Resolved unanimously that a congratulatory address be presented to His Majesty the King of the Belgians on the recognition by the Powers of the Congo Free State, whereby the resources of that State will be developed, its trade encouraged, and the interests of civilisation advanced, results mainly due to the efforts of His Majesty. Resolved that the said address be presented by a deputation of this Court, to consist of the Right Hon. the Lord Mayor, the Sheriffs, Alderman Sir Thomas Dakin, the mover, Mr. Alderman De Keyser, the seconder, Mr. Deputy Bedford, and the Chairman of the City Lands Committee, Mr. E. Dresser Rogers, attended by two of the principal officers of the Corporation.

"May 7, 1885. The Right Hon. the Lord

Mayor reported that the deputation appointed by this Court on the 30th ulto., did, on Monday, the 4th inst., attend His Majesty the King of the Belgians at Brussels, according to His Majesty's appointment, with the address agreed to on the 30th ulto., in these words:

"'To His Majesty King Leopold II.
"'King of the Belgians.

"'May it please your Majesty, we, the Lord Mayor, aldermen and commons of the City of London, in Common Council assembled, beg leave to offer to your Majesty our most respectful and earnest congratulations on the great work that you have performed in the interests of civilisation by the creation of the Congo Free State in the heart of the dark Continent of Africa.

"'Deeply interested as is the City of London in all that concerns the progress of religious, humane, and commercial principles, and in the suppression of slavery and the slave trade, we, the Corporation of that city, recognise in the enlightened, philanthropic and disinterested efforts of your Majesty and in the bloodless victory wrought thereby, a triumph far grander than the greatest achievements of the sword. In the introduction, establishment, and spread of education and industry, and in the founding of an organised and established authority, we see, under Divine providence, the beneficent and unselfish handiwork of your Majesty.

"'In thus carrying freedom of religion, prosperity and happiness to those who so sorely needed these precious gifts, your Majesty has signally proved the sincerity of your royal words:

"'"I have thought that it was perhaps our duty

to think of others, of the disinherited who in the far-distant land are still deprived of all those advantages with which we are so abundantly blessed."

"'Signed by order of the Court,
"'John B. Monckton (Town Clerk, Guildhall).'

"And that His Majesty received them very graciously, and was pleased to make a most gracious answer thereto, which was read and ordered to be entered on the Journal and printed in the minutes of the proceedings sent to every member of this Court as follows:

"'I heartily thank the Right Hon. the Lord Mayor and the Municipal Council of London for the valuable mark of sympathy they, at this present moment, give to the Independent State of the Congo, and for the great honour they do me. I deeply feel the value of your flattering and encouraging address.

"'The independent State of the Congo was born of a desire to abolish slavery by peaceful means, and to serve in Africa the great cause of civilisation, commerce, and religious freedom. The fundamental basis of the new State is free entrance given to all kinds of goods. Never on its frontiers will any customs be levied on imported goods. Just as the political constitution of the State is particularly favourable to commerce, so may the same thing be said of its topographical constitution.

"'A mighty river runs through the whole length of the independent State of the Congo, and its numerous tributary streams fall almost perpendicularly into the river on all sides. Providence has thus abundantly intersected these realms with a series of natural canals. One obstacle alone

hinders commerce from benefiting from these natural advantages, and from giving full scope to its development in the basin of the Congo. I allude to those cataracts which interrupt navigation from Vivi to Stanley Pool. Industry will have to triumph over this obstacle, which, if I may so express myself, offers the necessary means to overcome the difficulty. The topography of the land is such that the route leading to the centre of Africa must necessarily follow the banks of the Congo, so that the efforts made to establish it must, perforce, prove remunerative. I hope in the interests of civilisation and commerce the capitalists will be struck by this remark, which I am happy to have been able to address to the Municipal Council of London, the greatest commercial city of the world, and which is always so favourable to commerce of every kind.

"'Pray accept, now, my Lord and gentlemen, the heartfelt thanks of the independent State of the Congo, and of its new chief, who is very proud of his title of Member of the Worshipful Company of Turners of London, and most desirous to see the ivory of Central Africa brought to our market. I trust, my Lord and gentlemen, that you will convey to the Municipal Council of London, in whose name you are here to-day, the expression of my best thanks, and assure them of my deep gratitude.'"

Twenty-five Years afterwards.

Extract from the Despatch of H.M. Government to the Government of Belgium, dated June 11, 1909.

"The ravages of sickness and the results of the System of Administration pursued by the authorities

during the last twenty years have swept away altogether the population of some districts and greatly reduced that of others. . . . The question is not one of argument, but of fact. . . . Under the previous Government of the Congo,* in large districts, if not in the greater part of the whole Congo State, the forced labour exacted from men, and in many cases from women, amounted to nearly, if not quite, the whole time of an adult year after year. In the Kasai district, under the guise of trade, taxation in rubber was exacted in open defiance of the laws of the Congo State. It was by such means that the greater part of the rubber exported from the Congo State was obtained. The export of rubber has not fallen off, and no reports have reached His Majesty's Government to show that the amount of forced labour and illegal or excessive taxation exacted from the natives have diminished."

* That is, the Government which endured from 1885 to August, 1908, when Belgium annexed the Congo.

PART I

A NATION'S HONOUR

GREAT BRITAIN AND THE CONGO

CHAPTER I

A MORAL CRISIS IN THE HISTORY OF THE NATION

"We believe that in the minds of thoughtful and observant men and women, and especially in the minds of those who deliberately desire to be guided by the principles of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is a deep and growing sense that things cannot, without dishonour, be left where they are. The very principles of liberty, for which the British public have contended for a hundred years, are now at stake. If the members of the Christian Churches of the land will make their voices heard, the Statesmen, not of England only, must needs listen, and the best instincts of every civilised country will respond. We have been reminded by our foremost official spokesman upon foreign affairs that 'British Treaty Rights and British interests' justify separate action on the part of Britain.

"In our judgment the greatest by far of British interests is the maintenance of the moral force of the nation, and the greatest of all risks which the nation can run is the abandonment of its moral obligations."

Extract from the religious manifesto to the nation signed by the undermentioned, July, 1909.

RANDALL CANTUAR.
COSMO EBOR.
JOHN CLIFFORD, M.A., D.D.
JAMES ROBERTSON, D.D.,
Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.
A. F. LONDON.
J. SCOTT LIDGETT, M.A., D.D.
President Wesleyan Conference.
EDW. SOUTHWARK.
ARCHIBALD HENDERSON, M.A., D.D.,
Moderator of the United Church of Scotland.
C. BIRMINGHAM.
J. H. SHAKESPEARE, M.A.,
Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland.
F. J. LIVERPOOL.
J. D. JONES, M.A.,
President, Congregational Union of England and Wales.
F. OXON.
J. MONRO GIBSON, M.A., D.D.
HENRY SCOTT HOLLAND.
C. SILVESTER HORNE,
Chairman-Elect Congregational Union of England and Wales.
G. CAMPBELL MORGAN, D.D.
RENDEL HARRIS.
JAMES HENRY,
Moderator Free Church of Scotland.

The time has come when the British nation must decide whether it is in earnest over this Congo question; whether the well-nigh unprecedented demonstrations of determination and passion which it has given in this problem of foreign policy have been something more than the outward expression of a cheap and fleeting sentiment; whether the weighty utterances of its leading public men have been sincere or have wrung hollow; whether the action of its Churches and of its most renowned divines has been inspired by the example and teaching of the Master—who endured all for right—or whether that action has done no more than momentarily ruffle the surface of a nominal Christianity.

The nation is faced to-day with a crisis in its moral history. For four years, from its platforms and pulpits, from its parliamentary benches; from the mouths of its governing statesmen, its foremost politicians and greatest administrators, its spiritual guides, its citizens eminent in the paths of constructive thought, its chief newspapers, its leaders in all that makes for the greatness of the nation—have poured forth condemnation and denunciation of a legalised iniquity, a system introduced into the great heart of Africa based upon robbery, slavery, and spoliation, battening upon human misery, reviving all the abominations of a bygone age, trampling every principle of freedom, justice and liberty underfoot, flaunting in the face of the Christendom of the twentieth century precepts and practices of mediæval darkness, proclaiming aloud the right of its beneficiaries to pile up untold riches from the slave-labour of millions of men.

The nation has challenged that monstrous claim set up by a Potentate who owes to Great Britain his throne ; the sovereign of a country which owes to Great Britain its independence and its neutrality. Before Europe the nation has declared that the edifice of slavery reared in Equatorial Africa must and shall disappear. The nation has pledged its honour, its prestige, its reputation that an end shall be made of the rubber slave trade in the Congo, which its explorers opened to the world, and which in a moment of aberration it entrusted to the tender mercies of those who have decimated and enslaved a helpless population.

Mindful of its great liberating traditions, imbued with the noble example of its past reformers who have leagued to it a heritage of moral glory, recalling its special responsibilities in the Congo Settlement of 1884–1885, this nation has invited the world to believe that its aroused conscience is still a force to be reckoned with in international politics. It has committed its Government, it has committed itself too deeply, too irremediably to draw back without dishonour to itself, without inflicting deadly and enduring injury upon the races of Africa for generations, without sacrificing for long years to come that moral force in international affairs with which for more than a century principalities and powers have had to reckon ; that moral force to which the defenceless and the weak have seldom appealed in vain.

The nation to-day should be made to understand that the task to which it has set its hand is not completed ; that although the "Congo Free State" has passed away, the system of misrule elaborated and enforced by its sovereign is still

flourishing, under the Belgian flag; that the victory is a barren one so long as the basic evils which the "Congo Free State" incarnated remain; that there has been a change of name, but that the old firm remains and is carrying on the old game of plunder and slavery.

There are people to-day who are giving dangerous and dishonourable advice to the nation, bidding it rest content with having swept aside an irresponsible despotism, appealing to that political opportunism which is ever present at its Council boards, invoking the mysterious shades of what is called the "higher policy," playing upon the fears of the short-sighted and timorous, endeavouring to lead moral sense astray by dishonest argument. The diplomacy of a friendly Power, but administratively and financially involved in the Congo scandal, is being used in the interest of its own position to turn our diplomacy from its course. The apathy of Continental statesmen, busy with their own complicated manœuvres on the European chess-board, is conjured up to minister to national weakness. The false prophets of the creed which waves the flag of international complications when a great wrong requires redress, while justifying war for a coaling station or a gold mine, a sphere of influence on a ten-per-cent. interest, are busily and subterraneously at work, with their everlasting appeal to selfish interests, their dismissal of great moral issues as "sentiment," their contemptuous deprecation of all that is noble and sound in a nation; thrusting aside the forces of national consciousness as necessarily irresponsible, uncalculating, unwise, fanatical.

The danger is not inconsiderable. But no

nation really great, standing upon a foundation of unquestionable Treaty right, thrice armed with the justice of the cause, with a comprehension of the immense issues involved in that cause and with the knowledge of unselfishness of motive, will draw back because the task which it has undertaken has been apparently rendered more difficult and not less difficult, as those who guided the course of its diplomacy so confidently predicted, by a Belgian annexation of the Congo on the conditions under which that annexation was accomplished.

Let us now recall to what extent the British nation is committed to break the chains of slavery within which the native races of the Congo State writhe impotent and perishing.

CHAPTER II

WHAT THE NATION HAS DONE AND SAID

"It is not, I think, too much to say that no external question for at least thirty years has moved the country so strongly and so vehemently as this in regard to the Congo."—Sir EDWARD GREY, House of Commons, Feb. 26, 1908.

"Public opinion in this country has been more moved over this question than by almost any question of the kind which I can remember."—Lord LANSDOWNE, House of Lords, Feb. 24, 1908.

IN the letter published in the *Times* of December 22 last, a veritable national manifesto, which greeted the Foreign Office despatch to the Belgian Government of November 4th when, for the first time, the policy consistently preached for years by those who have guided the reform movement in England and in the United States, was endorsed by the British Government,* it was stated that:

"The movement (for reform) has been the outcome, not only of indignation at the almost incredible barbarities inflicted upon the natives, as borne witness to in many British and foreign official reports and in voluminous unofficial testimony, *but also of the conviction that the principles and practices introduced into the government of the Congo threaten the people and natural resources of Central Africa with destruction.*"

* And by the American Government in its despatch of January 11, 1909, to the Belgian Government: *vide* for its full text, the *Times* of December 23, 1908, and the Quarterly organ of the Congo Reform Association for April, 1909 (Granville House, Arundel Street, London, W.C.).

That has been the keynote, as I shall show subsequently, of the contention of the reformers from the very start of the reform movement, several years before the creation of the Congo Reform Association which crystallized its views in the following terms :—

"The case against the existing methods of Congo State Administration does not rest merely upon numerous charges of individual acts of cruelty towards natives such as have tarnished, from time to time, the annals of every colonising Power, *but upon the System itself whereby the Congo State maintains itself in being, and which involves cruelty and oppression on a vast scale, and in endemic form.*" *

The letter in the *Times* went on to say that:

"Welcoming a Belgian annexation of the Congo territory, we have, nevertheless, contended that, apart from wider considerations of statesmanship, the special responsibilities incurred by the people of Great Britain in the events which led up to the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885, make it incumbent upon them to ensure that no settlement for the future government of the Congo shall receive the sanction of this country *which does not place the freedom and the just rights of the native population upon a footing of permanent security.*"

In the concluding sentence of the letter recognise that the—

". . . Settlement of native rights in the Congo will prove a turning point in future dealings between white and black in the vast tropical region of Africa."

This document was described by the *Times* as a "spontaneous manifestation of a very unusual

* First manifesto issued by the Congo Reform Association, March, 1904, with the authority of its President, Earl Beauchamp, its preliminary Committee and its supporters.

kind,"* the issue of which was only to be explained by the "undoubted fact that on this subject Public Opinion is unusually strong." It conveyed at once an expression of national relief at the evidence of a firmer and clearer stand on the part of the Foreign Office coupled with an assurance of heartfelt support to the Foreign Secretary "under any circumstances . . . by all sections of Public Opinion in Great Britain" in maintaining that stand. "All sections" were, indeed, represented among the signatories of the letter and the catholicity of the signatures was even more remarkable than their numbers. The Earl of Cromer, Lords Balfour of Burleigh, Clifford of Chudleigh and Weardale; nineteen Bishops; all the great leaders of Nonconformity; the Deans of Norwich and Worcester; the Rectors of Liverpool and Birmingham; seventy-six Members of Parliament, Unionists, Liberals, Labour-men; the Lord Mayors of London, Bradford, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Newcastle, and Sheffield; the Lord Provost of Edinburgh; twenty-two provincial Mayors; the Presidents of the Newcastle, Glasgow, Halifax, Manchester, Oldham, Sheffield, and Wakefield Chambers of Commerce; thirteen newspaper and magazine editors representing such divergencies of opinion as can be imagined, for example, between Mr. St. Loe Strachey, Mr. W. T. Stead and Mr. J. S. R. Phillips; the President of the National Liberal Federation; the Master of the Temple, and names famous in the world of letters, medicine, philanthropy, philosophy and commerce, such as Sir William Ramsay, Sir Charles Dalrymple, Sir T.

* "An unprecedented demonstration."—*Le Patriote* (Catholic), Brussels.

Fowell-Buxton, Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir Lauder Brunton, Sir Alexander Simpson, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Preceded as this letter was by the long series of public demonstrations which I am about to recapitulate, it would be difficult to find a historical parallel for so remarkable an encouragement, so decisive a mandate to a Foreign Secretary, a conviction so earnestly sustained that the destinies of the peoples of tropical Africa, their relations with the outer world, and the effect of the nature of those relations upon future history, hang in the balance. With three notable exceptions, those of the independent papers, *Le Patriote* (Catholic), *La Dernière Heure* (Liberal), and *Le Peuple*, the official organ of the Labour Party, the attitude of the Belgian Press, more especially the organs inspired by the governing classes, towards these manifestations of British feeling has been one of unrelieved insolence,* and this, despite the fact that up to within the last few months since the

* Comments of the Belgian Press on the February, 1908, debate in the British Parliament:—

"If Englishmen think they can move us with their clamour and their noisy demonstrations, they are mistaken."—*Courrier de Bruxelles.*

"Let us wait firmly and march straight to our goal."—*La Chronique.*

"Sir Edward Grey admitted he could do nothing alone. It is a declaration of bankruptcy."—*Le XXieme Siècle.*

"What strikes us most in Sir Edward Grey's speech is his sense of powerlessness, notwithstanding all its menacing tirades."—*Petit Bleu.*

"Any interference by England with Belgium's sovereign rights to administer the Congo in her own way would be unfriendly, arbitrary, violent and unjust."—*Le Matin.*

"We shall never cease repeating that Belgium is her own mistress in this matter. Did Sir Edward Grey, in his speech, forget that he was addressing an independent State, and think that he was threatening a country which was England's vassal?"—*Independance Belge.*

actions and utterances of the Belgian Government have left no doubt as to that Government's intentions, it has been the constant endeavour of British public men and of the British Press without exception, to draw a clear distinction between the Congo Free State Government and the Belgian Government, between the cosmopolitan administration of the Congo and the Belgian people. Indeed, an almost exaggerated tenderness for "Belgian susceptibilities" has been displayed in this country throughout the whole controversy.

In the past six years there have been no fewer than fourteen debates in Parliament.* To use the words of Earl Percy in the debate of July, 1904—

> "There has never been a policy of which it may be said as truly as of this one, that it is the policy not so much of H.M. Government as the policy of the House of Commons."

In January, 1906, the Lord Mayor of Liverpool summoned a citizens' meeting. The Town Hall was crowded to excess, and on the motion of Dr. Chavasse, Bishop of Liverpool, supported by the late Mr. Samuel Smith, M.P., a resolution was passed, condemning the system of rule existing in the Congo as "a revival under worse forms of the African slave trade."

The initiative of the civic authorities of Liverpool was followed by similar action on the part of the civic authorities of our largest cities and of

* House of Commons, May 20, 1903; June 9, 1904; August 4, 1905; July 3, 1906; House of Lords, July 3, 1906; House of Commons, May 15, 1907; House of Lords, July 29, 1907; House of Commons, August 1, 1907; House of Lords, February 24, 1908; House of Commons, February 26, 1908; July 27, 1908; February 25, 1909; May 27, 1909; July 22, 1909.

many towns and boroughs all over the country. Citizens' meetings presided over by the Chief Magistrates, and supported by influential residents belonging to varying political camps and religious denominations—Church dignitaries sitting cheek by jowl with Nonconformist ministers at a period of bitter sectarian strife; Tory squires and Radical politicians met together in a common determination—have been held at Sheffield,* Glasgow, Reading, Southport, Sunderland, Jarrow, Colchester, St. Helens, Swindon, Bath, Chesterfield, Bury, Accrington, Taunton, York, Newcastle, Oldham, Nottingham, Scarborough, Birmingham, Plymouth, Devonport, Ramsbottom, Barnsley, Ilford, Newport, Barrow, Stafford, Oxford, Huddersfield, Grantham, Ossett, Sandbach, Coventry, Yeovil, Bideford, Exeter, Norwich, Bradford, Hull, Bournemouth, Birkenhead, Woolwich, Northampton, Yarmouth, Berwick-on-Tweed, Torquay, Newton Abbot, Warrington, Stockton-on-Tees, Dunfermline, Edinburgh, Keighley, Derby †—fifty-four in all.

In the majority of cases the attendance at these citizens' meetings was unusually large and marked by decision and resoluteness; in only three cases was there any opposition, and that manufactured. In every case except the three I have referred to, the resolution proposed was voted with unanimity. At the Hull meeting, held on June 20, 1907, where 3000 people congregated, the citizens of the city of Wilberforce, led by their Mayor and Sheriff, rose to their feet to acclaim the speakers. Such scenes have been witnessed in many places by those who have been privileged to participate in this great national movement.

* May 29, 1906. † May 26, 1908.

Of other meetings, not officially summoned by the Chief Magistrate upon the requisition of the local inhabitants, there have been thousands of all kinds great and small: held in the largest available public building; held in the open air—as at the vast gathering of 10,000 Methodists at Mow Cop, whence from every platform a resolution was voted and forwarded to the Foreign Office; held in the humble Baptist Chapel. I have spoken to an audience of 1500—nearly all men—in a covered market-place rigged up with benches for the occasion. There have been meetings composed almost entirely of working men. There have been meetings where men prominent in social standing, in politics, and in administration, have been gathered together, as at the Holborn Town Hall on June 7, 1905, when the platform supporting Sir Harry Johnston as chairman included a future Viceroy of Ireland, a future Deputy-Speaker of the House of Commons, and two members of the present Government.* There have been meetings in the provinces which can hardly have been surpassed in enthusiasm and numbers for many a long day in this or any other country. I have seen the Sun Hall in Liverpool, which accommodates 4000, packed from floor to ceiling, and in April, 1908, upon the occasion of the third anniversary of the foundation of the Congo Reform Association, the Central Hall in the same city, with a sitting accommodation for nearly 3000 persons, was inadequate

* Two members of the present Cabinet, the Right Hon. John Morley and the Right Hon. John Burns, were among the first to join the Congo Reform Association. The names of its Executive and officers and the president of its branches in the provinces are given in the Appendix.

to contain the crowd, which flowed into two adjoining halls. At that particular meeting the Lord Mayor, who presided, received messages of support from the Chief Magistrates of Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield, Derby, Oxford, Huddersfield, Plymouth, Stafford, Sunderland, and many other places, and ninety-two Members of Parliament telegraphed their approval and sympathy.

No one who witnessed it is likely to forget the scene in the Coliseum at Leeds * when 4000 Free Church delegates, at the conclusion of an appeal by the Rev. F. B. Meyer, rising in their seats, solemnly pledged Nonconformity to leave no stone unturned to end the reign of oppression on the Congo.

Still more remarkable was the demonstration in the city at the Queen's Hall last February twelvemonth. The Lord Mayor in the chair in his robes of office, with his official attendants, by his side the Sheriffs, the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, the Mayor and Sheriff of Hull, behind him some forty Members of Parliament, men distinguished in the literary and professional world, leading representatives of the Church and Nonconformity. Sir John Kennaway, Sir George White, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, spoke on that occasion for all sections of the House of Commons.

"The immense hall—one of the most difficult in London to fill—was packed from floor to topmost gallery, and the scene outside before the doors opened was one that is witnessed only on some great national occasion." †

The newspapers of all shades of politics agreed

* March 6, 1907.
† *Daily Chronicle*, February 22, 1908.

that London had seldom witnessed so impressive a demonstration.

If the nation had had its way, the Congo natives would long since have been emancipated, and a problem needing at one time little more than firm handling to secure a definite and honourable settlement, but which official irresoluteness has complicated and magnified, would have been solved ere this.

In many ways other than by parliamentary debates and public meetings has the nation borne witness to its convictions in this matter. As far back as November, 1906, a representative deputation,* restricted in numbers by request, was received by Sir Edward Grey, supported by influentially signed memorials from Sheffield, Leeds, Leicester, Derby, Plymouth, and other towns. A year earlier, in November, 1905, a memorial signed by a large number of citizens had been presented to Lord Lansdowne when on a visit to Liverpool.

On June 7, 1907, a memorial was presented to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman at Plymouth, signed by the mayors of that town, of Devonport and of Exeter, by Lord Clifford of Chudleigh, and by the Bishop of Exeter and others, praying that H.M. Government would give their assent to no scheme of Belgian annexation which did not provide "guarantees of a definite and explicit character for a total reversal of the existing system."

On June 19 of the same year an influential

* It included Lord Monkswell, President of the Congo Reform Association, Lord Overtoun, representing the Scottish Churches, the Bishop of Southwark, representing the Church of England, Rev. F. B. Meyer for the Free Churches, Sir Charles Dilke, Sir Gilbert Parker, the Lord Provost of Glasgow, Sir T. Fowell-Buxton, and Sir Edward Russell.

deputation of Nonconformist leaders waited upon Sir Edward Grey at the Foreign Office to hand him personally the resolution adopted by the Free Church Council at the great meeting in Leeds referred to above. The deputation included among its members, Mr. Compton Rickett, M.P., Dr. Rendel-Harris, Dr. Robert Horton, Dr. Clifford, the Rev. J. Scott Lidgett, and Mr. Robert Whyte.

In November of the same year a striking "Appeal to the Nation" was issued to the Press, signed *inter alia* by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the President of the Free Church Councils, the Presidents of the National Liberal Association, of the Congo Reform Association, of the Church Missionary Society, the Lord Mayors of our principal cities, and Sir Harry Johnston.

The religious forces of the nation have been thoroughly aroused and have given innumerable indications of the intensity of feeling animating them. The noble utterances of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Talbot, the Bishop of Oxford, and others, have not lacked imitators on the Episcopal bench and among the clergy. The Bishop of London by deed and word has done much to stimulate the metropolis. In January, 1908, an appeal* was sent out from London House to all the clergy and ministers of the Church and Nonconformity. "The year 1908 opens, therefore"——a passage in this appeal reads—"with the prospect of the continued oppression of the Congo races and the prolongation of this systematic outrage, a prospect which must be intolerable to every

* Signed amongst others by the Bishop of London, the Bishop of Kensington, Dr. Clifford, the Rev. J. Monro Gibson, etc., etc.

British subject who realises the preponderating part played by the British people in the foundation of the Congo Free State."

The year 1909 draws to its close and the prospect shows no change—"a terrific libel upon the Christian name." *

Northern Convocation † passed in both Houses a series of resolutions on February 28, 1907, and Southern Convocation ‡ followed suit on May 3 of the same year. "A burden upon the conscience of England" ran one of the resolutions. Both Houses acted in a similar manner this year.

The Nonconformist world has been moved to a marked degree. In 1908, and again this year, the pledge taken at the Leeds meeting in 1907 was renewed at the annual gathering of the National Free Church Councils. The Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, the Baptist Union of Scotland, the Presbyterian Church of England, the Wesleyan-Methodist Synod, the Congregational Union of England, Scotland, and Wales, the Friends, have all at different times, and in most cases repeatedly, urged the national duty upon the Government. The Scottish Churches took similar action in 1908.

On April 14, 1908, the President of the Free Church Councils issued a circular to the nine hundred councils urging the celebration of a special Congo Sunday, which was held in a great number of Nonconformist Churches throughout the land; and towards the end of the same year, upon the Bishop

* The Bishop of Durham.

† Speakers: the Archbishop of York, the Bishops of Wakefield, Durham, Liverpool, and Sodor and Man, Archdeacon Madden, and Canon Smethwick.

‡ Speakers: the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishops of Southwark, Birmingham, and London.

of Liverpool's initiative, acting in co-operation with the Nonconformist bodies, a "Congo Sunday" was observed throughout Liverpool and district. Several other important cities followed this example, including Hull and Newcastle.

In 1906, 1907, 1908, and during this year, resolutions poured in to the Government from north, south, east, and west, and there is hardly a Member of Parliament who has not received representations at one time or another from his constituents. On March 3 of this year a deputation of some sixty members representing all the Chambers of Commerce in the country waited upon the Foreign Secretary to demand the restoration of legitimate commerce in the Congo, the only key which can unlock the door of freedom and shatter the chains of slavery. In February, 1908, the King's speech from the throne contained the following reference to the Congo—

"My Government are fully aware of the great anxiety felt with regard to the treatment of the native population in the Congo State. Their sole desire is to see the Government administered in accordance with the spirit of the Berlin Act, and I trust that the negotiations now proceeding between the Sovereign of the Congo State and the Belgian Government will secure this object."

In July of this year the eloquent and statesmanlike manifesto to the nation quoted at the head of Chapter I. was made public. And the net result of it all? The net result of this great national upheaval in a righteous cause—a cause resting upon the rock of Treaty rights, upon an unshakable basis of truth and justice: a cause which has withstood all attacks upon its purity, its soundness,

its statesmanship? The net result of these six years of diplomatic effort on the part of the mighty British Empire; these fourteen debates in Parliament; these fierce denunciations from the highest authorities, the most experienced statesmen, the leaders of the nation's religious life?

King Leopold II., no longer autocrat in name, but pulling the strings behind the scenes, dominating a Cabinet whose members owe their advancement to his royal favour; secure in the possession of his ill-gotten millions wrung from long years of human anguish. His financial partners, the Concessionnaires, confirmed in their monopolistic "rights" over native labour and natural resources. The Belgian Press daily pointing the finger of derision and scorn at "British powerlessness." Continental chancellories chuckling at the impotence of British humanitarianism which in the past they had been taught by experience to respect. The Belgian Government scarcely less contemptuous beneath the veiling of diplomatic usage. Our refusal to recognise annexation treated with absolute indifference as the growl of some ancient and kennelled hound, displaying a double row of toothless gums, incapable of aught but the exhibition of a surly temper. The native races of the Congo still enslaved, and the system which denies to them all human liberties, the system against which statesmen and ecclesiastics have thundered these many moons, raising its head unbroken and unabashed. The grip of the modern slave trade tightening upon the vitals of Africa, preparing for to-morrow bloody war and certain retribution.

Will the British nation acquiesce?

CHAPTER III

WHAT THE NATION HAS DEMANDED

"Any administration of the Congo which leaves the essential claims and practices of the present system unchanged, whether under an autocratic or a national *régime*, must, in view of their own responsibilities in the matter, be intolerable to the people of this country."—"Appeal to the Nation," November, 1908. The ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY and others.

"The thesis at the base of the present system must find no place in the constitution of the Congo as a Belgian Colony or Protectorate, viz. that the ownership of all the commercial resources and products of the Congo above Stanley Pool is and remains vested in individuals resident in Europe. Belgian annexation on this basis will perpetuate the evils of the Leopoldian *régime* in a worse form, because it will give a legal sanction to the present position, which is essentially illegal, and in direct violation of the conditions under which the Congo State was established."—Sir HARRY JOHNSTON (*Times*, July, 1907).

IT was inevitable and natural that, confronted with a huge and scientific system of criminal oppression the exact like of which the world has never seen, Public Opinion, when first aroused, should have been more profoundly stirred by its effects upon *individuals* than by the astounding claims upon which the system sought to justify its existence, and which affected not individuals only, but the race, not the present generation alone, but the generations to come.

Atrocities have bulked large in popular imagination. It was right and proper that they should. And do not let us forget them, now that in the

greater part of the Congo the population is so broken, so diminished, so poverty-stricken and crushed that it no longer pays to terrify the countryside by deeds which have left an indelible stain upon European civilisation in the Dark Continent. Do not let us forget the processes whereby, in greater part, the Congo tribes have been induced to bow the neck to the yoke of shameful and destructive servitude. Do not let us forget that successive holders of office in Belgium—some of them in the present Cabinet which at one and the same time disputes our right to interfere, protests the purity of its intentions, pleads for time, more time, and still more time which it utilises to revive scandalous Royal Decrees and to strengthen existing conditions—have done nothing to put a stop to the inferno of wickedness of which the Congo has been the scene since 1892. What is the record of the governing politicians of Belgium who profess indignation to-day because this nation demands something more than declamatory protestations and promises in the teeth of actions which contradict them; and who appeal with unctuousness to official England against unofficial England? For years they denied everything, although they knew all, or if they did not know *all*, could have known all had they chosen. They denied everything, systematically, comprehensively, abusively; denied every outrage, every violation of elemental human rights which was daily occurring in the Congo. They went on denying until truth—propelled by the British nation—burst the barriers and flooded them. And even then the boldest of them lifted their heads above the waters of moral putridity let loose, and denied again! Look at the action of the

long-lived de Smet de Naeyer Ministry which stood between the King and exposure, gave him before Europe its moral support and assistance during those ghastly years when the process of breaking the tribes to the system was in full swing and deeds worthy the diseased imagination of some opium-sodden maniac were at the height of their intensity. When Congo soldiers returned from their man-hunts with baskets of human hands—men, women, and children's hands—which they laid at the feet of their White commanders to be carefully checked against the cartridges they had expended! When officials of the rubber trusts crucified women and children, decorated the village huts with the intestines and sexual remains of slaughtered males! When women and children rotted in hostage-houses by scores and hundreds. All this carnival of outrage could have been suppressed if Belgian governing statesmen had possessed ordinary courage and humanity. The Belgian Government could have sent out a Commission of Inquiry of its own. It could have compelled officers of the Belgian army to reveal the truth before courts-martial. It could have stopped the rubber premiums paid to them. It could have forbidden, as it was over and again implored by M. Vandervelde and his friends to do, its officers from going to the Congo. The Italian Government was compelled to take that step in the case of Italian officers, many of whom had been induced to volunteer for service in the Congo in ignorance of the conditions. It could have insisted upon the production of the judgments of the Boma Courts, impeccable in substance, farcical in execution. It could have appointed Consuls in the

Lower and Upper Congo. But it preferred to yield with slavish submission to the King's will. It deliberately closed its eyes and shut its ears while endorsing the Leopoldian creed, "the native is entitled to nothing." * "Contrary to its duty, the Belgian Government has constituted itself the systematic defender of the Congo Administration. From 1895 onwards the conspiracy against truth has been organised from top to bottom under well-nigh incredible conditions, in order to hide the crimes which are committed in the Congo." † It took refuge in the pitiful quibble that the Congo State was a foreign State whose actions it could not control and over which Belgium could exercise no power to interfere, while inciting its official representatives abroad to active interference on behalf of the Congo Administration.

No; let us remember these things, never let our memories be purged of them. And let us remember that if mutilation and suchlike abominations are not carried out on a systematised scale to-day, because it has become unnecessary for the end in view, that the lash and the hostage house, the deadly grinding slavery relieved by occasional massacre, termed "fighting," remain.

But gradually the general public came to share the knowledge, restricted until then to the few, that these atrocious outrages were but the incidental and fatal consequences of the enforcement, in its early stages, of a deliberate policy which sought to establish in permanent form a complete revolution in the now accepted character of the

* The Belgian Premier, 1903.

† M. Coffs, Catholic Deputy, in the Chamber of Representatives, February, 1906.

relations between civilised and subject races, to resuscitate the conceptions of the sixteenth century, to undo the work of the reformers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and to fling back European thought into the cesspool of immorality from which the growth of education had laboriously uplifted it. The nation began to grasp that the world was faced with a conspiracy which, by the vast financial resources at its disposal, by its ramifications, by the supreme ability of the man directing it, was everywhere rallying to its side the latent forces of moral reaction, infusing into them renewed energy and power, playing for high stakes. Nothing less than the rapid acquisition at the lowest possible initial outlay, of the natural wealth of the African tropics by the enslavement of their inhabitants. Here was no ordinary case of misgovernment; no sporadic outbreak of criminality. Here was a cynical challenge flung at the feet of civilisation, a claim illimitable in its aims, affecting not this generation of Africa only, but the entire future of the race and its dealings with the outer world.

And so, as conviction spread and the nation became aware of what lay behind these interminable stories of massacre, misery, mutilation, and terror, it testified to that conviction in all its public manifestations.

The demand of the nation became concentrated upon the abolition of the system, and slowly, step by step, public opinion brought a reluctant officialdom to front the issue,* from which officialdom had consistently shrunk since its first attempt to tackle it in 1903.†

* British Despatch to Belgium, November, 1908.
† British Note to the Powers, August, 1903.

"Any administration of the Congo *which leaves the essential claims and practices of the present system unchanged*, whether under an autocratic or a national *régime*, must, in view of their own responsibilities in the matter, be intolerable to the people of this country." ("Appeal to the Nation," November 7, 1907. Signed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and others.)

"That this House, being convinced that the *present system of administration on the Congo is destructive of the personal liberty and economic rights of the native population* . . ." (Extract from the Resolution voted unanimously by the House of Commons, February 26, 1908.)

"The system is, therefore, identical all over the Congo, and as this Association has never ceased for one moment contending, it is with the claims themselves, with the claims upon which the system reposes, and not with the various forms the exercise of those claims may assume in this or that part of the Congo territory, that civilisation is called upon to deal. . . . The evil has gone too deep for half-measures. . . . The Association persists, therefore, in its conviction that the only remedy for the present state of affairs on the Congo is the one obviously natural remedy, viz., the throwing open, in accordance with Treaty obligations, of the entire territory to the legitimate operations of commerce between its inhabitants and the outer world; the rescinding of the decrees appropriating the land and its produce on the plea of the 'vacancy' of the former; the restoration to the native population of elemental rights . . ." (Extract from Memorial to H.M. Government from the Congo Reform Association, August 8, 1908.)

"This freedom (freedom of the native population), we have never ceased to urge, can be secured only by legislative action which shall restore to the native races their communal rights in the land with power to trade freely in the produce of the soil, rights destroyed by the edicts of 1891–92, when all the land and all the natural produce of the soil were appropriated by the governing

power." (National manifesto in the *Times*, December 23, 1908.

This conspiracy against the moral conscience of the twentieth century which the British nation has pledged itself to destroy, is not less dangerous because it is being carried on to-day in the name of the Government of a small European State instead of in the name of the Sovereign of that State under a defunct title : it is more dangerous in all its aspects.

It is not less infamous because the native population has in some parts either accepted its lot in desperation, rendering a perpetration of the more atrocious deeds with which the world has rung for a decade unnecessary, or invites death rather than a prolongation of daily misery as is reported, for example, in the last published White Book—

"The result is that the native is forced to work all the month, and go sometimes fifteen days' march to collect the rubber. Asked why they refused to pay any more taxes, the natives replied that, in order to pay, they were obliged to work almost incessantly. They went out* a band of fifty, of whom only twenty-five or thirty would return; the others died of hunger, starvation, or were killed by leopards; the women are obliged to bring them out food,† and no one remained in the villages. 'To die of work and hunger or an Albini bullet is all the same; let the soldiers come, but we will collect no more rubber.' It must be noted that the revolt among the rubber collectors is a pacific one; not possessing arms or the courage to use them, they have

* *I.e.* into the forests to seek for the rubber demanded of them.

† *I.e.* to leave their villages, and with their children follow their husbands into the forests to convey to them food from the plantations, camping out sometimes for weeks at a time, exposed to all kinds of dangers and privation.

simply refused to collect more for the taxes * in quiet despair."

If it be objected that the despatch from which the above passage is quoted, was penned before annexation took place, the answer is a simple one. It represents the facts which obtain to-day thirteen months after annexation. For proof one need go no further than the rubber returns by the Congo steamers and the last despatch of H.M. Government.†

And now let us look this conspiracy to "give legal sanction" to the enslavement of the peoples of Central Africa squarely in the face. Let us examine this issue "which far transcends any mere question of contemporary politics"—to use the Archbishop's pregnant phrase—from various points of view other than that of the physical cruelties inflicted upon the *present generation* of Congo natives. We are accused sometimes by superior persons, rich in everything save intelligence, of "sentimentalism." They will require to use a microscope of great power to detect any sentimentalism in the ensuing pages.

I would ask that, in perusing Part II., the reader will bear in mind that the Congo territory is not—with one or two exceptional areas—a country which the White race can *colonise*, and where complicated questions of land tenure arise between the two races. The Congo is in the tropical belt—a Black man's land.

* "Taxes," to meet which the population must labour all the year round, diminishing in numbers, in vitality, and becoming yearly more impoverished.

† June, 1909.

PART II

THE ISSUE

"This (the System of the Congo State) is a System very simple and direct in its conception. It is a kind of inversion of the old slave trade. The principle of that institution was to take Africans to plantations where Europeans could live, and to make them work there, under the lash if necessary, to produce wealth for their owners. The improvement of arms of precision, quick-firing guns, and similar advantages, have now enabled the White man, impelled by the same purpose, to venture into African territory, and, without taking upon himself the risks of settlement or the odium of being explicitly a slave-owner, to compel the native population to extract for him there from the soil, the wealth that he covets."—Sir Sydney Olivier, C.M.G., in *White Capital and Coloured Labour*, 1906.

"The united authority of lawyers in Belgium and all Europe will not convince me that a System of this sort is sanctioned by any law human or Divine . . ."—Lord Cromer, House of Lords, Feb. 24, 1908.

CHAPTER IV

IN WHICH IS DEMONSTRATED THE FALSITY OF THE CONTENTION ADVANCED BY THE LATE ADMINISTRATION OF THE CONGO, AND BY THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT TO-DAY, THAT THE LAND OF THE CONGO AND ITS NATURAL PRODUCE ARE WITHOUT NATIVE OWNERS

"That which overshadows everything is the question of the *Domain*: the question of knowing who has the right to collect forest produce. I am told to-day that it is the Government and the Companies. We affirm on the contrary that the rights over forest produce belong to the natives; and we assert that any other System is a System of confiscation and robbery."—M. EMILE VANDERVELDE, Belgian Chamber, April, 1908.

"To whom belongs the rubber growing on the lands of the Congo natives? To the natives and to none other, unless by their consent and with just compensation."—THE BELGIAN JESUIT FATHER, A. VERMEERSCH, in *La Question Congolaise*, 1908.

THE paramount object of European rule on the Congo since the Edicts of 1891–92 has been that of pillaging its natural wealth to enrich private interests in Belgium.

To achieve this end a specific, well-defined System was thought out in Brussels and applied on the Congo.

That System has endured for sixteen years. Its essential features have been known to successive Belgian Governments for ten years. They were known to the present Belgian Government

when the latter took office. They have been defended in principle, and their effects in practice denied by successive Belgian Ministers,* including Ministers in the present Belgian Government, some of whom have even been actively concerned in the working of this System.†

The present Belgian Cabinet is not, therefore, confronted with any new problem. It has assumed the task of governing the Congo, thoroughly aware of the position of affairs, fully informed of the principles upon which the Congo has been managed, completely posted as to the root of the evils, and perfectly cognisant of the effective remedy.

Belgium's first Colonial Minister, who now holds office, left the Administrative Board of a Congo Concessionnaire Company ‡ to enter the Cabinet. That Concessionnaire Company was controlled by the late Administration of the Congo, its Admistrators were in close and constant communication with the latter from which the Company derived its powers and which participated in the Company's profits.

Ignorance as to the reforms required cannot then be pleaded by the present Belgian Government. Ministers were aware of them long before they took office. But, although annexation was consummated on August 20, 1908, a year has gone by and the System inaugurated by the late Administration remains unchanged. Not only has the Belgian Government done nothing; not only has the Belgian Government given no indication of

* Messrs. de Smet de Naeyer, Van den Heuvel, Favereau, Scholaert, Davignon.

† Messrs. Renkin and Delbeke.

‡ Compagnie des Grands Lacs.

an intention to alter the prevailing System; but the Belgian Government has furnished numerous tokens of a design to perpetuate the System.

The Congo territories are still being pillaged, ruthlessly and systematically, for the enrichment of private interests and to enable the Belgian Government to maintain its hold upon the territory without calling upon the Belgian tax-payer for grants in aid.* The Belgian electorate was not consulted on the question of annexation. Ministers had no mandate from the Nation to commit it to annexation. The Belgian public was, however, assured that Belgium would contract no financial obligations in annexing the Congo,† and Ministers shrink from the electoral disaster which, under the circumstances, would probably follow a demand upon the public purse; grants-in-aid of a substantial character being, nevertheless, essential if the System of pillage still obtaining is to be replaced by just and normal rule in accordance with the Acts of Berlin and Brussels and International Treaty rights. Moreover Belgian Ministers are under a pledge to the King to leave the System inaugurated by him intact in its essentials.

This exact expression of the truth is but the echo of the same truth eloquently pleaded in the Belgian Chamber by distinguished and patriotic

* Which every country knows to its cost is an inevitable feature of the management of Tropical Dependencies—at least in the earlier stages of their development.

† "According to the conclusions of the Report, the African State is now self-supporting; the expenses of the Administration are covered by the Customs taxes, and by the revenues of a National Domain capable of vast increase, thanks to the process of development, and the debt incurred by the Congo State will be in no sense a burden upon the Belgian tax-payer."—Preamble to the Treaty of Cession. See Part III.

Belgian statesmen, and its enunciation here infers no reflection upon the Belgian people as a people. These cannot be held responsible, *at this stage*, for the actions of a Government which committed them uninformed and unconsulted to the task of administering an enormous dependency in the African tropics. They have no experience in tropical colonisation, and they simply do not understand the question.

The determining features of the System of rule which has prevailed on the Congo since 1892 may be briefly stated in three sentences.

The rights of the natives to the produce of their own soil, which has commercial value on the world's markets, are taken from them and vested in aliens living thousands of miles away.

The natives cease to be owners of property and cease to be economic units; and the alien appropriators claim the right, as representatives of a superior civilisation, to extract from the natives the labour which is required for the collection of this produce and its shipment to Europe, where it is sold for the exclusive benefit of the aliens in question.

The proceeds of this sale form the principal asset of the alien Administration, and provide the dividends of its affiliated corporations; the natives are thus systematically robbed of their natural wealth and of their power to enrich themselves by trade and labour. In other words it is a traffic in the labour of slaves.

Under the Administration known as the "Congo Free State" the alien beneficiaries from this system were—

First: The Sovereign, in his personal capacity,

who claimed the produce of the soil in the portion of the territory known as the "Crown domain."

Secondly: The Sovereign, in his capacity of autocratic ruler of a "State," whose aboriginal inhabitants he had deprived by decree of all that they possessed, and who claimed for the "State" the produce of the soil in the portion of the territory known as the "Private domain"—later as the "National domain."

Thirdly: Financial Corporations known as *Concessionnaire* Companies or Proprietary Companies, among which the produce of the remaining portion of the territory was distributed by various methods, the "State" retaining, in most cases, half the shares.

The proceeds from the sale in Europe of the produce were, so far as the "Crown domain" territory was concerned, paid into a private exchequer, and not accounted for. So far as the "Private domain" or "National domain" was concerned, they were utilised for the purpose of enforcing the System upon the country. So far as the *concessionnaire* area was concerned, they were distributed to shareholders in the shape of dividends.

Under the present Belgian Administration the alien beneficiaries from this System are—

First: The Belgian Government, which claims the produce of the soul both of the "Crown domain" and of the "Private or National domain."

Secondly: The same financial corporations, armed with the same powers, and the Belgian Government, which, by the Act of Transfer, has replaced the "Congo Free State" as holder of half the stock in these Corporations.

The issue at stake is, therefore, clear.

It is simply whether this system of pillage applied to the Congo territory is valid—

From the point of view of the historical circumstances connected with the establishment of European rule on the Congo;

From the point of view of International Treaty obligations and the Law of Nations.

Whether it is permissible—

From the point of view of the Imperial duties and responsibilities of European Powers whose protected territories border the territory where this System is enforced;

From the point of view of elementary justice and civilised usage.

The Congo Reform Association's existence of nearly five years has been spent in making known the nature of this System to the civilised world; in making known its inevitable effects, and in bringing forward facts and arguments designed to meet the above-stated questions by a direct negative.

The moment would now seem to be opportune for a fuller and more detailed examination of native rights in land and produce, such as they existed in the Congo prior to the Edicts of 1891–92, such as they there exist to-day, and such as they exist and are recognised in other tropical regions of Africa where native society is based—as in the Congo—upon communal ownership of property. It is evident that civilisation is, by the uprising of this System, and the attempt to give it permanence, faced with a problem which vitally concerns the future of the African tropics and their inhabitants, and, indeed, the whole character of European rule in the Dark Continent.

The natural prelude to such an examination must necessarily consist in setting forth the only defence which has been advanced to justify this wholesale appropriation of the natural wealth, earning capacity, and trading rights of many millions of Africans.

That defence consists in the assertion that the land upon which this produce of commercial value grows (or may be made to grow by cultivation) is not and has never been owned by the natives: that it is, consequently, "vacant" land, and as such is the property (together with its products) of the Belgian local Administration of the Congo, or, indeed, of the Belgian "State" itself, as the Belgian Government may think fit. The term "National domain" is thus interpreted, not as connoting the patrimony of the aboriginal inhabitants held in trust for them by the Belgian Government, but as the "National" property of Belgium.

No attempt has ever been made, at least to the writer's knowledge, to substantiate that assertion. It remains a mere assertion. On the other hand, elaborate treatises have been drawn up; lengthy *consultations juridiques* (by Maîtres Barboux, Nys, and others) have been published; innumerable speeches have been delivered in the Belgian Houses of Parliament, one and all proclaiming the right of a "State" to appropriate and to utilise "vacant" lands. If it can be shown by inquiry that "vacant" lands exist, and if the word "State" is used to designate the body of the people united under one Government, or acknowledging the suzerainty of an alien over-lord, and if the proceeds derived from the utilisation of these "vacant" lands by that Government or alien over-lord are expended

in the interests of the body of the people—as is the case, for example, in the British dependencies in tropical Africa—then the contention of Belgian ministers and jurists is not, and has never been, disputed. If, on the other hand, the word "State" is used to designate the citizens of another country altogether, and it is claimed that these citizens are entitled to acquire and to benefit exclusively from the wealth derived from a territory in Africa, and obtainable only by the labour of the native; then the contention of Belgian ministers and jurists amounts to this, that sixteenth-century conceptions are still valid in the twentieth century, and that civilisation has made no progress in five hundred years.

But this is not the point at issue, or, rather, it is not the Belgian way of stating it.

The point at issue, according to the Belgian case, is not the theoretical rights of a "State" over "vacant" lands, but the assertion that the land of the Congo, upon which produce of commercial value grows (or may be made to grow by cultivation), has no native owners; that the only valid native claim to ownership of land applies to the sites of native towns and villages, and to the areas around them under cultivation for food-stuffs; that all land outside those sites and cultivated areas, and all its produce of commercial value, is the property of the European State, or of the European State's local administration, which has acquired political power in the country.

Does the land, beyond the limits of native towns and villages and their adjacent farms or food plantations, possess native owners, or does it not?

If it can be shown that the land of the Congo

does possess and has always possessed—save where there is no population—native owners, and was always recognised as possessing native owners until the Edicts of 1891–92; and if it can be shown, concurrently, that wherever the native owners of the land had had access (prior to the Edicts of 1891–92) to European markets for the disposal of the produce of the land, either by direct or indirect dealings with Europeans, they traded freely in that produce; then the appropriation by the governing authorities of the Congo of the land's natural wealth, on the plea that the land possesses no native owners, stands out as a violation of native law, of native rights, of international law, and of elementary morality, without precedent in contemporary history, and the Great Powers, in allowing that policy to be perpetuated by the Belgian Government, are deliberately permitting a declension of the moral law and assenting, in practice, to the legalisation of the enslavement of the African races by the white.

I contend that this proposition is easily demonstrable.

What authority did the founder and president of the International Association of the Congo—King Leopold II.—invoke, in order to justify the claim of that Association to be recognised by the Great Powers as Suzerain of the Congo?

It was the authority with which the International Association alleged itself to be invested by the production of upwards of four hundred and fifty Treaties concluded by Mr. Henry M. Stanley and his staff on the Association's behalf with native chiefs. That, and no other, was the principal authority appealed to by King Leopold II., and it

was armed with this authority that he came before the civilised world.

"We sounded—said Stanley in 1884—the feelings of the natives. We laid the question before them as frankly as I now lay it before you. We made treaties with them by which they ceded to us the sovereignty and every right which could be taken by others to our disadvantage . . . By this act the International Association came into quiet possession, and those Powers disposed *to annex the land* and frustrate the work could not expel us from the country. . . . While we travelled through and through the Congo lands—making roads, stations, negotiating for privileges, surveying the vast area, teaching and preparing the natives for the near advent of a bright and happy future for them, winning them by gentleness, appeasing their passions, *inculcating commercial principles, showing to them the nature of the produce that would be marketable when the white man should come*, and everywhere accepted *as their friends and benefactors*—we became convinced that the real obstacles to the recognition of the projects of the Association were not the natives. . . ." *

The text of the Declarations exchanged between the International Association and the Great Powers, "by which the International Association of the Congo has obtained the recognition of the Governments," † is, moreover, quite conclusive on this point. On April 22, 1884, General Sanford, King Leopold's representative in Washington, obtained the recognition of the United States Government to the International Association on the primary ground that—

"*By Treaties with the legitimate sovereigns in the basins of the Congo and of the Niadi Kialum and the*

* Address to the London Chamber of Commerce, September 19, 1884.

† Annex I. to Protocol 9 (Africa, No. 4, 1885).

adjacent territories upon the Atlantic there has been ceded to it territories for the use and benefits of Free States established and being established under the care and supervision of the said Association in the said basins and adjacent territories to which cession the Free States of right succeed." *

On December 16, 1884, M. Strauss, King Leopold's chief representative at the Berlin Conference, obtained the recognition of H.M. Government to the International Association on the primary ground that—

"*By Treaties with the legitimate Sovereigns in the basins of the Congo and Niadi-Kwilu, and in adjacent territories upon the Atlantic, there has been ceded to it territory for the use and benefit of Free States established and being established in the said basin and adjacent territories;* that by virtue of the said Treaties the administration of the said Free States is vested in the Association." †

Thus the International Association based its claim to international recognition as a suzerain power in Central Africa on the strength of having purchased, or otherwise obtained, authority from a number of legitimate African sovereigns to so represent itself, and producing upwards of four hundred and fifty Treaties in proof of its assertion.‡

* *Idem.* † *Idem.*

‡ The United States Despatch to Belgium of January 11, 1909, is emphatic on this point. "It should always be remembered," writes Mr. Root, "that the basis of the Sovereignty of the Independent State of the Congo over all its territory was in the treaties made by the native Sovereigns who ceded the territory for the *use and benefit* of free States established and being established there under the care and supervision of the International Association, so that the very nature of the *title* forbids the destruction of the tribal rights upon which it rests without securing to the natives an enjoyment of their land, which shall be a full and adequate equivalent for the tribal rights destroyed."

Now it is on the face of it patent that the transfer of sovereign rights by native chiefs to the International Association, constitutes proof of the possession by those native chiefs of such rights. It is equally patent that as these native chiefs possessed these sovereign rights over the land, the land could not have been without native owners. The International Association claimed, by virtue of these Treaties, sovereign rights over an enormous stretch of country. For the successors of the International Association to contend to-day that the rights of these "legitimate sovereigns," or their descendants, did not or do not extend beyond the boundaries of the native towns and villages and their adjacent food plantations, would be to admit the perpetration of a gross fraud by the International Association upon the Great Powers. From that position no escape is logically possible.

It is clear, therefore, that the Treaties with native chiefs, on the strength of which King Leopold induced the Great Powers to recognise the flag and *status* of the International Association, were Treaties signed, and admittedly so, with legitimate native sovereigns holding sovereign rights over the land and, consequently, over the produce of the land, which, as will be shown later on, they were, in point of fact, utilising at the time.

The next point for consideration is whether, in transferring their sovereign rights over the country to the International Association, the "legitimate" rulers of these native communities intended—and were regarded by the International Association as intending—to relinquish the proprietary rights of their people in the soil and in the produce of the soil ?

From whatever aspect it is approached, any contention in the affirmative is untenable.

In the first place, the African king or chief, under the patriarchal system prevailing on the Congo and throughout the greater part of the African tropics, does not himself own the land. He is merely its trustee on behalf of his subjects. This is a matter of common knowledge to all African administrators and, were it necessary, a volume could be compiled on the subject. Exceptions to this rule are rare.

It is equally well known, in the second place, that African communities regard the land as their inviolable possession, being at once the supplier of all their needs and the origin of all their religious conceptions, and that no African community would knowingly barter away the land of its ancestors on any consideration whatsoever.

In the third place, the acts and declarations of the International Association on the one hand, and the Protocols of the Berlin Act on the other, prove conclusively that the International Association never dreamed of putting forward such a contention; that no pretension of the kind was even whispered, and that the Great Powers would have declined to entertain it for a moment, had it been advanced.

The pre-eminent endeavour of the International Association was to win the confidence of the Great Powers and of public opinion in order to secure international recognition. With this object in view, its founder and his assistants represented themselves as desirous to promote above all things the welfare of the natives, and to forward the development of commercial relations between them

and the outer world. The elimination of native ownership in the soil and in the produce of the soil, would not only have been a singular fashion of promoting the welfare of the natives, but it would have made the development of commercial relations between them and the outer world impossible. It would, therefore, have been totally at variance with the Association's professions.

We have seen how Stanley, on his own showing, and acting as the "chief agent" of the International Association, went up and down the river repudiating any idea of a desire to annex the land, assuring the natives that the advent of the white man in the upper river would place markets for the disposal of their produce at their very doors, and securing Treaties for the International Association by these and kindred means.

In its official manifesto* the International Association declared that "all can enter into free commercial relations with the natives"; that its aim was "to civilise Africa by encouragement given to legitimate trade"; that "thanks to trade all this produce will enter into circulation, the counterpart of its value will return to Africa for which it will prove a source of prosperity."

The mere fact that these declarations were made and repeatedly accentuated; that they formed, indeed, the basis of the International Association's claim to recognition, suffice to dispose of any idea that the International Association regarded its Treaties with the native chiefs as implying that the natives had been thereby despoiled, voluntarily or otherwise, of their

* Communicated by Stanley to the Manchester Chamber of Commerce on October 21, 1884.

proprietary rights in the soil and its fruits, and their ownership in land limited to the sites of their towns and food plantations. These declarations were in themselves an admission that the native communities of the Congo preserved *all* their rights in the soil and its produce since, not only the development of trade and commerce, *but the very existence of this relationship is dependent upon the possession by the native of produce to sell to the European against cash or merchandise or both as the case may be.*

The Treaties themselves (in so far as they are publicly accessible) do but corroborate the declarations made to the world by the International Association. The comments of Stanley, and of his principal assistants who together obtained them, are equally significant. He constantly complains of the difficulty of securing even sites for stations and the building of roads, so suspicious were the natives that their rights in the land were to be interfered with. Similar experiences are constantly being recorded by European administrators and travellers in tropical Africa. Now, Stanley finds himself compelled to "pay £32 down and a *rental* of £2 a month"; again, he says, "In casting up the gross account of the expenditure, I discovered that £156 in English gold had been paid. Consider that for this sum we had only obtained a right of way. . . ."

That the Treaties were above all Treaties of *protection* and trade is abundantly evident. Thus, the Treaty uniting "all the Chiefs of Wambundu, Kintamo, and the Association into a confederation for the preservation of peace in the region south and west of Stanley Pool" stipulates that no

stranger shall enter the territory of these federated chiefs without a guarantee from the Association that "such stranger was a *bonâ fide trader*." * In the "verbal Treaty" arranged with the Chiefs of Lukolela, Juka, and Mungawa, there is an agreement "to cede to us (the International Association) sovereignty over their country." In the sentence immediately following Stanley says: "They also sold to us a fine piece of land," etc., showing that acceptance of a prospective suzerainty, carrying with it increased trading facilities, did not involve a surrender of ownership in land, which had to be bought or leased by the International Association, of which further proof is forthcoming in the word "rental," used by Stanley in the passage already quoted.

Stanley drew, from the very sacredness of these native rights in land, additional arguments in favour of the international weight which should rightly attach to his Treaties, as tending to demonstrate their absolute honesty—

> "The Association," he writes, "were in possession of Treaties made with over four hundred and fifty independent African chiefs, whose rights would be conceded by all to have been indisputable *since they held their lands by undisturbed occupation, by long ages of succession, by real Divine right.*" †

Yet, to-day, the rulers of the Congo interpret this "Divine right" of the natives to their lands, in the sense of a "Divine right" conferred upon Belgium, in the name of civilisation, to rob the natives of their lands, and to treat them as the property of the Belgian State!

* "The Congo" (Treaty dated April 8, 1883).
† *Idem* (p. 329).

In the Treaty of April 1, 1884, with the "King and Chiefs of Ngombi and Mafela," the chiefs "solemnly affirm that all the country belongs absolutely to them."

After Stanley, the most active of the International Association's agents in Treaty-making, was the Belgian, Captain Hanssens. He arrived in the Congo early in 1882, at the time when Stanley was preparing to return home. Ten years later his letters were published.* Their testimony is invaluable, as the following extracts will show.

From Leopoldville, October 5, 1882.—"As soon as I have made up my mind as to the best spot for the new station, I shall sign a regular contract *with the owner of the land.*"

From the Equator Station, April 25, 1884.—"This district is governed by two great chiefs, Mukwala and Mongombo, who also enjoy *the paramount authority over the whole territory between Lake Mantumba and our station at Lukolela.* I made blood brotherhood with them, and succeeded in concluding a treaty which places this huge territory *under the protection* of the Committee. . . . My journey has been fertile in results. I have concluded with the great chief Mkuku a Treaty which insures us *the protectorate* not only of the Liranga territory, situate as you know on the right bank of the defile before Ngombi, but of the Ubanghi territory itself."

From the Station of Bangala, May 11, 1884.—"I am happy to tell you that I have succeeded in founding the station of the Bangala. Since the 9th inst., Lieutenant Coquilhat occupies, with his men and his goods, a site which *has been ceded to the expedition by the great Chief Matamwike.* The negotiations were long and difficult . . . I accepted the only site *offered me,* thinking it essential for the time being to get a footing in the country. It must fall to the head of the station

* "Lettres inédites du Capitaine Hanssens." Le Congo illustré.

(Coquilhat) to seek later on to extend it *by pacific negotiation, and if this extension is possible* M. Coquilhat seems to me to be the man who can carry it through."

From Leopoldville, May 15, 1884.—"The natives now know perfectly well that the blue flag is the symbol of peace and friendship at the moment, and the hope of a greater prosperity for the future. The great number of treaties I have negotiated and the comparatively short time taken in the negotiations are the best proof of this. All the tribes *aspire to place themselves under our protection*, and if I acceded to all the demands made to me, I should have to found as many stations as there *are inhabited districts* . . . Descending the river, I stopped at the important district of Isangi. I had no difficulty in concluding a *treaty of friendship*, and I obtained very easily the *cession of a site* which will serve later for a station . . . I have *bought the site* of Liranga, belonging to the paramount Chief of Ubangi, on the right bank of the Ngombi district . . . Our situation at the Falls is excellent from every point of view. We are on the best of terms with all the chiefs of the vicinity, who show us the profoundest respect and testify the warmest friendship. They attach a very great importance *to our protection*."

Could anything be more explicit?

If any lingering doubt remained as to the character of these Treaties, it would be dispelled by a perusal of the Treaty with the Palaballa chiefs. The document may be usefully reproduced in part.

"Pallaballa, April 19, 1884.—A supplementary Treaty made this day between H. M. Stanley, chief agent of the *Association Internationale Africaine*, and the undersigned chiefs of the districts of Pallaballa, to explain the meaning and the spirit of the term 'Cession of territory,' found in the Treaty made on the 8th January, 1883, between Lieutenant Van de Velde and the said chiefs of Pallaballa:—

"It is agreed between the above parties *that the term 'Cession of territory' does not mean the purchase of the soil by the Association,* but the purchase of the Suzerainty by the Association, and its just acknowledgment by the undersigned chiefs."

These agreements, then, were treaties of protection and trade, of over-lordship, of suzerainty, willingly contracted by the "legitimate sovereigns" of the Congo in return for immediate and potential advantages, and hastily concluded by Stanley and his assistants on behalf of the International Association, with the object of providing King Leopold II. with something more tangible to place before the council of the nations, and to oppose the pretensions of France and Portugal, than declamatory utterances, exploring feats, and philanthropic professions.

They were nothing more. They could have been nothing more on the strength of the evidence they and their negotiators themselves supply.

It remains to be said that the first act of the first Governor appointed by the International Association (which had by then changed its name to that of the "Congo Free State"), Sir Francis de Winton, was an Ordinance declaring that no one was entitled "to despoil the natives of the lands they occupy." * A further admission of native rights of ownership in land is provided in the *Arrêté* of one of Sir Francis de Winton's successors, M. Cam. Janssen, dated June 30, 1887, in which the latter recommends Europeans desirous of founding trading stations in the Upper Congo, "to make with the natives the necessary arrangements to ensure for themselves a peaceful

* Bulletin Officiel, No. 2, Ordonnance du Ier Juillet, 1885.

occupation of the site, and to prevent conflicts and hostilities." *

So much for the conclusive proof supplied by the acts and declarations of the International Association that, in transferring their sovereign rights over the Congo to the Association, the "legitimate" rulers of the native communities in no way relinquished—and were in no way regarded by the International Association as having relinquished—the proprietary rights of their people in the land and in its produce.

That no such claim, had it been advanced by the International Association, would have been sanctioned by the Powers, is sufficiently obvious from the whole character of the proceedings at Berlin and by the utterances of various Statesmen which preceded, accompanied, and followed those proceedings. Nevertheless, so precise, so distinctive, so entirely free from ambiguity are many of these passages, that some of them at least may be usefully recalled.

So anxious were the Great Powers that commercial relations between the native communities of the Congo with the outer world should be *unfettered even by vexatious commercial arrangements*, that the Act of Berlin (Art. 5) forbade the granting of "a monopoly or favour of any kind in matters of trade."

Prince Bismarck opened the proceedings of the Conference by associating in the closest possible manner the rights of the natives in the produce of their soil, with their progress and advancement. He said—

* Bulletin Officiel, No. 9, September, 1887.

"The Imperial Government has been guided by the conviction that all the Governments invited participate in the desire *to associate the natives of Africa with civilisation by opening the interior of that continent to trade.*"

Count de Launay, the Italian delegate, declared at the closing sitting that—

"We have neglected nothing in the bounds of possibility for opening as far as the centre of the African Continent, *a wide route to the moral and material progress of the native tribes and the development of the general interests of commerce and navigation.*"

Baron Lambermont, one of the Belgian delegates, stated that—

"The temptation to impose abusive taxes *will find its corrective, if need be, in the freedom of commerce.*"

Baron de Courcel, one of the French representatives, asserted that—

"The colonial experiences of the sixteenth century, *when colonies were ruined by being managed in the sole interest of the Metropolis, must not be renewed.* . . . We have laid down, apart from the clauses of the Act, a certain number of principles *which ensure against any infringement in the future of the freedom of commercial transactions with the natives of the Congo Basin.*"

Barons de Courcel and Lambermont together signed a Report which is attached to the Protocols of the Act, and in which they declare that: "An unlimited right for every one to buy and sell" is the only rational interpretation of the term "commercial matters." *

* Baron Lambermont protested to the king when the Edicts of 1891–92 were promulgated.

H.M. Government entered the Conference imbued, in the words of the British delegate, Sir Edward Malet, with the principle of—

"The *progress of legitimate trade* with guarantees of equal treatment to all nations and *the good treatment of the natives.*"

Mr. Kasson, the United States delegate, declared that—

"The President of the United States regards this local government, *or any successors* resting upon the same basis of principle, as an assurance that the natives will learn that civilisation and dominion of white men means for them *peace and freedom and the development of useful commerce free to all the world.*"

M. Engelhardt, another of the representatives of France, in his official report upon the Conference wrote—

"Native communities—and this is a point which deserves to be noted—were not considered as *communities so unstable in occupation and constancy that the soil they inhabited, even when not utilised, can be regarded as unoccupied land.* . . . Every time that a vote or a simple proposal raised the interests of the African races, the assembly at Berlin showed that it *did not look upon them as purely accidental associations, without juridical rights, or outside the community of the rights of men.*"

The following declarations made subsequently to the signing of the Act are equally significant.

M. Beernaert, then Prime Minister of Belgium, asserted that on the Congo there would be "absolute freedom of barter, property, commerce, and navigation."

Lord Vivian (Great Britain) declared that—

"Freedom of trade was established in the interests *not only of civilisation but of the native races of Africa.*"

M. Frelinghuysen, the American Secretary of State, remarked that—

"Soon these millions of people inhabiting the interior of Africa will, *under the inspiring influence of civilisation, become purchasers of every kind of provisions, manufactured goods, implements, etc.*

All these declarations, provisions, and stipulations would have been illusory and meaningless, if applied to a territory whose inhabitants had been precedently despoiled of the whole of their rights in the land and in the produce of the soil. The entire proceedings would have been the hollowest of shams, and the utterances of these distinguished statesmen the veriest persiflage.

I make bold to have established—

I. That the claim of the International Association, afterwards the Congo Free State, to international recognition, formulated, at first, secretly,* then openly, by King Leopold II., reposed primarily upon the existence of a number of Treaties negotiated by Mr. Stanley and his staff in the name of, and for the benefit of the International Association, with the native rulers of the Congo.

II. That before these Treaties were negotiated, and at the time they were being negotiated, the native rulers and their subjects were owners of the land and of the produce of commercial value the land contained, and not merely owners of the sites of their respective towns and villages and adjacent farms under cultivation.

* Vide *The Life of Lord Granville*, by Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, 1905, now Lord Fitzmaurice (brother to Lord Lansdowne).

III. That one of the principal declared objects of the International Association was the creation of such a condition of peace and security in the country as would lead to an extensive development in commercial transactions between the natives and the outer world, by giving to the former increased accessibility to markets for the disposal of their produce.

IV. That, in recognising the suzerainty of the International Association, the native signatories to the Treaties did not surrender their rights and the rights of their people in the land, and *à fortiori* did not surrender their rights and the rights of their people to trade freely with white men in the produce of commercial value obtainable from the land.

V. That no attempt was ever made by the International Association to contend that the Native Communities on the Congo had surrendered their ownership in the land and in its produce to the Association; that, on the contrary, the Association and its agents went out of their way to proclaim the opposite; and that the Great Powers granted, separately and collectively, recognition to the International Association on the understanding that native rights in land and produce were unquestioned and unquestionable.

These conclusions, based entirely upon international records and upon the acts and declarations of the International Association and its agents, destroy entirely the defence since set up by the successors of the International Association, by which they seek to justify their appropriation of the natural wealth of the Congo, on the ground that the land outside the villages and their adjacent food plantations is "vacant" and without native owners.

CHAPTER V

THE EARLY TRADE OF THE CONGO TO THE FOUNDING OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

"I deny that, *in law*,* the natives have been despoiled of the property in their forests, *and that they ever had the idea of exploiting them methodically.*"—M. RENKIN, present Colonial Minister for Belgium, in the Belgian House, April, 1908.

"To permit freedom of trade in the Congo domain would not be economic liberty but economic anarchy."—M. SEGERS, in the Belgian House, April, 1908.

A DEMONSTRATION of the falsity of the contention advanced by the late Administration of the Congo, and by the Belgian Government to-day, that the land outside the sites of the native towns and villages and adjacent food plantations is without native owners, does not suffice to show the full enormity of the system inaugurated by the Edicts of 1891–92, continued for sixteen years, and still maintained by the Belgian Government.

It is only by following this destructive demonstration by a constructive demonstration of native rights in land and produce, that the monstrous crime which has been perpetrated, and which is being perpetrated, can be properly understood; and the dangers, both moral and material, to the future of the races and resources of the African tropics, and to the future of European rule within them, adequately estimated.

* Italics mine. Human or Divine law?

To be effective, this constructive demonstration should be made to cover (so far as establishing proof of a long-continued usage for trade purposes of the produce of their land by the natives is concerned) three periods more or less distinct—

(*a*) The period antecedent to the creation of the International Association.

(*b*) The period contemporary with the creation of the International Association, and with the negotiation of the Association's Treaties with the "legitimate sovereigns" of the country.

(*c*) The period following the recognition of the International Association (which then took the name of the "Congo Free State") by the Great Powers, up to the Edicts of 1891–92.

The demonstration will be completed by summarising the mass of evidence, which has become publicly accessible since 1892, as to native tenure in land, and native usage of land, for purposes of trade and of internal industry and sustenance.

It would be going beyond the scope of this volume to do more than pass very rapidly over the early history of European relations with the Congo, but a brief sketch is essential if only to show the antiquity of the Congo trade in forest produce, and its gradual progression inland.

In 1485 Diogo Cam was "received by the King of Congo with great affection, and had the happiness of inspiring him with a great desire to receive instruction in the tenets of the Christian religion." The southern portion of the Congo basin would appear to have been at that time under the sway

of a central authority whose influence radiated far and wide.

That the authority of the King of Congo extended to the Upper River would seem to be clearly established by the Portuguese records. In 1491 Ruy de Sousa assisted Njunga-a-Kuum, then King, in an expedition against the Mundequetes, who "lived in the islands and on the banks of the lake from which flows the Great River," and were, doubtless, identical with the Batekes of Stanley Pool.*

By the close of the century the Portuguese themselves appear to have established trade relations with the Batekes. †

The sixteenth, seventeenth, but especially the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, furnish numerous records of a brisk trade in forest produce between Europeans and natives, extending all along the coast, from Cape Lopez to Ambrizette. During the greater part of the period above mentioned this trade existed, of course, concurrently with the traffic in slaves, then recognised as a legitimate form of commercial activity by all classes of society (including ministers of the Gospel). By 1839 the slave trade in Congo waters was practically at an end, thanks to the mutual exertions of the commanders of British and French vessels of war; but it was not until 1857 that the destruction by British ships of the slave barracoons at Senga-Tenga gave the traffic its death-blow north of the Congo river, ‡ although a so-called

* F. L. de Sousa, *Hist. de Dom*, 1662.

† Pigafetta, *Kingdom of Congo.*

‡ Two years previously the chief slave depôt south of the Congo, at Ambrizette, had been destroyed by the Portuguese.

"free emigration" of natives—resembling somewhat the "free emigration" of *serviçaes* from the mainland of Angola to San Thomé at the present day—to the French possessions in the West Indies prevailed until 1860, when the friendly representations of the British Government to the Emperor Napoleon III. led to its abolition.

The trade in natural produce consisted chiefly of red wood, wax, copper, tin, lead, and iron; large quantities of ivory were also disposed of by the natives. These articles were bartered for linen, cloth, copper kettles, muskets, and other European merchandise.* With the final extinction of the over-sea slave traffic, legitimate trade received a considerable impetus, and, by the middle of the nineteenth century, European commerce was pushing inwards from the coast (chiefly through the active enterprise of native "middlemen" traders) into the Upper Congo and the Kasai valley from all directions. Everywhere the natives of the country, even in the remote interior, unknown, unexplored, and inaccessible to Europeans, were giving increasing evidence of their eagerness for commercial pursuits which, together with a passion amounting to veneration for their land, is the dominating characteristic of the vast majority of the inhabitants of the tropical regions of Africa. Soon European merchants, abandoning their old custom of trading from hulks moored in the estuaries of the rivers, founded establishments on shore. According to old ships' manifests in the writer's possession, the Congo natives were purchasers at that period of (*inter alia*) the following

* For the records of this old trade the published works of Bosman, Barbot, Isert, and various Portuguese authorities may be consulted.

European goods in exchange for their produce: cloth, satin strips, umbrellas, red baize, tobacco, powder, muskets, straw hats, kettles, brass rods, iron pots, machettes, pipes, razors, looking glasses, beads, Dutch knives, and snuff-boxes.

By the seventies European merchants had crossed into the Congo Basin, pushed in behind Loango and up the lower Congo, and commerce had penetrated far into what was destined to become the "Congo Free State." According to Stanley's figures the value of the Congo trade had reached £2,800,000 annually by 1880, for "378 miles of water frontage" (which included part of the coast line now known as "French Congo," part of the coast line known as Angola, and both banks of the Congo as far up as Noki and Matadi), and in the previous year a single European firm had imported goods to the value of £287,400, of which £138,000 consisted of English cotton and flannel goods, and £64,000 of American cotton goods and American tobacco.

A considerable proportion of the produce sold by the Congo natives to European merchants in order to acquire this merchandise, came from the Upper Congo beyond Leopoldville. As the merchants progressed up the river, the coast trade fell off remarkably. (This phenomenon was repeated later on, at the expense of the Lower Congo factories, when Belgian merchants went up to Leopoldville and beyond.) Further proof of the fact that the natives of the Upper Congo were actively engaged in trade with the Ba-Congo middlemen, long before the International Association was born or thought of, is adduced by Stanley himself who, on his first journey down the river, speaks of the—

"Keen, enterprising, high-spirited people of the Upper River. Many a flotilla," he continues, "descends the great river five hundred miles down to Stanley Pool to wait patiently for months before their goods can be disposed of to the Lower Congo caravans."

The great distance to which trade had penetrated in the interior before the creation of the International Association is corroborated, curiously enough, by no less an authority than Commander Liebrechts, the Congo State's Secretary of State for the Interior, responsible above any other official of King Leopold's executive staff for the organisation from Brussels of the system under which the natives of the Congo have been robbed of the produce of their lands on the ground indicated in the previous chapter. In his *Guide de la Section de l'Etat Indépendant du Congo à l'exposition de Bruxelles-Tervueren en* 1897,* Commandant Liebrechts writes, on page 80, of the Batekes—

"The Bateke are traders also, but rather middlemen; they jealously guard the monopoly of transactions on Stanley Pool, thus holding the key to the whole trade of the Upper Congo. This incessant movement resulted in the fact that for many years, long before the arrival of Europeans, the riverine tribes of the Congo, as far even as the Aruwimi, possessed European merchandise, passed from hand to hand from the coast, and having thus acquired an extraordinary value."

Thus we have it recorded by this high official, so deeply incriminated in the system of oppression pursued for sixteen years on the Congo, that the natives for a distance of over 1000 miles in the interior were eagerly purchasing European goods

* Ouvrage publié sous la direction de M. le Commandant Liebrechts. Imprimerie Veuve Monnan, Bruxelles.

long before they had even seen a European—unless it were Stanley.

But in speaking—in 1897—of the Batekes holding a monopoly of trade at Stanley Pool and controlling the whole of the "trade" of the Congo, Commandant Liebrechts was deluding his readers. "Trade" had been extirpated five years before the Guide to the Brussels Exhibition had been compiled, and the Batekes, concurrently with that extirpation and the persecution which accompanied it, had "in one night" abandoned their homes in Congo territory and crossed over to the French bank.*

The incredible sophistries of Belgian ministers and their supporters in the Belgian Chamber, never appear to greater disadvantage than when they are bracketed with unimpeachable testimony proving that the natives of the Congo not only owned the land but utilised the produce of the land, and traded freely in it, long before the system of spoliation and pillage, which Belgian ministers are perpetuating, was forced upon them at the muzzle of the rifle and at the end of the lash.

Thus it has been shown by what precedes, that as far back as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the natives of the Congo littoral were engaged in trading operations with Europeans; that even at that remote period they gathered the produce of their land for commercial purposes; that these commercial transactions increased with the years and gained an ever widening area; that by the 'seventies and early 'eighties the ramifications of these commercial dealings had penetrated 1,000

* "Africa," No. 1, 1904, p. 22 of Consul Casement's report.

miles up the Congo, and that before Stanley concluded his Treaties with the "legitimate sovereigns" of the Congo, on behalf of the International Association, he was himself a witness of flotillas of native canoes waiting patiently at Stanley Pool to dispose of their cargoes of produce to the native middlemen of the Lower Congo, who, loaded with European merchandise, were tramping the weary 250 miles of path bordering the cataracts which separated the European trading stations on the lower river from their native clients on the upper river.

The further corroborative evidence to be now adduced will carry us through the period contemporary with the negotiation of the Treaties between the International Association and the "legitimate sovereigns" of the Congo.

CHAPTER VI

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE NATIVES OF THE CONGO WERE TRADING IN THE PRODUCE OF THEIR LANDS WHEN THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION WAS CREATED

"The natives have never possessed any territory."—M. DELVAUX, in the Belgian Chamber.

ONE would seek in vain for records emphasising more clearly the utilisation by the native communities of the Congo—to the extent then open to them—of their lands and produce, at the time when Stanley was winning them "by gentleness" to cede their suzerain rights to the International Association, than those which are provided in the brilliant pages of the "Founding of the Independent State of the Congo." How unutterably dishonest are the statements of Belgian politicians when bracketed with these records!

Stanley does not write in the usual stereotyped manner of the African traveller when narrating affairs outside the circle of his own real or invented personal experiences, but as a man who really understands the natives; who, though assuredly not tender of hand when opposed, or oblivious of the natives' faults, realised to the full their possibilities under firm and just rule, and realised, too, as a man who, for all his fervid idealism, was

intensely practical, the enormous potentialities of a commerce which would, as he most sincerely believed, develop and expand as the outcome of his action, making of the mighty river and its affluents a prodigious highway of industrial progress into the great heart of Africa, bringing profit alike to the peoples of the Congo and to the peoples of the Western world.* He saw in the unfettered expansion of these commercial relations, the true civilising medium for Central Africa, and his word-painting of the splendid material a far-seeing Administration would have to work upon possesses a convincing eloquence, which not all the legalised outrage, juridical subtleties, and shameful invasion of human rights of the last sixteen years can weaken. The following are some typical examples taken from these records—

"Bololo is a *great centre for the ivory and camwood powder trade*, principally because its people are so enterprising. The *native traders have agents residing at Stanley Pool*, to whom the ivory collected here is delivered, and the merchandise from the coast lying in store is consigned by the wealthy traders at Bolobo."

"This was the populous district of Irebu, *the home of the champion traders on the Upper Congo*, rivalled only in enterprise by Ubanghi, on the right bank. . . . It was, in fact, a *Venice of the Congo*, seated in the pride of its great numbers between the dark waters of the Lukangu and the deep brown channels of the parent stream. . . . These people were really acquainted with many lands and tribes on the Upper Congo.† From

* At this time Englishmen did not shrink from speaking about trade and commerce in the Congo. The stage had not been reached when references to trade were avoided as though the word contained something shameful.

† Compare this passage with the British Consular reports of 1907 —twenty-three years later—given in Chapter XIII.

Stanley Pool to Upoto, a distance of 600 miles, they knew every landing place on the river banks. All the ups and downs of savage life, *all the profits and losses derived from barter*, all the diplomatic arts used by tactful savages, were as well known to them as the Roman alphabet to us. *They knew the varied lengths of 'sina' ('long' of cloth), the number of matakos (brass rods) they were worth, whether of Savelish, Florentine, unbleached domestic, twill, stripe, ticking, blue and white baft; the value of beads per* 1000 *strings, as compared with the uncut pieces of sheeting, or kegs of gunpowder, or flint-lock muskets short and long.* They could tell, by poising on the arm, what profit an ivory tusk purchased at Langa Langa would be derived by sale at Stanley Pool. No wonder that *all this commercial knowledge had left* its traces on their faces; indeed, it is the same as in your own cities in Europe. Know you not the military man among you, the lawyer and the merchant, the banker, the artist, or the poet? It is the same in Africa, MORE ESPECIALLY ON THE CONGO, WHERE THE PEOPLE ARE SO DEVOTED TO TRADE."

"At Ikenge the natives manufactured a superior kind of pottery. Camwood powder is also extensively made. Ivory is purchased from the Watwa dwarfs. . . ."

(Writing of the future growth of trade on the Upper Congo)—"Cloth will win the day here eventually. We are *literally besieged for the very smallest refuse of clothing that we possess.*"

(Among the Basoko, on the Aruwimi)—"During the few days of our mutual intercourse, they gave us a high idea of their qualities—industry, after their own style, not being least conspicuous. They seemed to me to be *the most valuable people for this characteristic that I had met.* Their fishing canoes we witnessed coming in and going out continuously, and while the people traded with us, they continued to pursue the knitting of haversacks, hats, fish nets, or twist twine, after the industrial manner of the traditional grand dame of England."

"As in the old time, Umangi, Mpissa, Ukere, and Opoto, from the right bank, and Mpa, from the left bank, despatched their representatives with ivory tusks, large and small, goats and sheep, and vegetable food, *clamorously demanding that we should buy from them.* Such urgent entreaties, accompanied with blandishments to purchase their stock, were difficult to resist. . . ."

(On his return voyage to Europe he calls at some of the British settlements on the West Coast, and his fancy pictures how the chiefs and people of the Congo will be similarly enriched through the beneficent growth of trade)—"But at Duke Town and Creek Town I observed a sight which was priceless to me. I saw that the residences of the native chiefs had been constructed in England, and transported section by section and erected here—one costing £400, one £300, one £200. *This was the result of peaceful barter of palm oil*—corrugated iron buildings for African chiefs. They were furnished, too, in European style, with carpets, chairs, mirrors, and window curtains. . . . I can conceive Ngalyema, Makabi, Bankwa, Ibaka, Mangombo, Mugwala, Mata Bwyki, and a host of other Congo chiefs ordering corrugated iron houses and furniture from Europe for their ivory, *their palm oil, their rubber, their gum, camwood powder, orchilla weed, beeswax, grains, and spices.* Duke Town showed how remarkable a civiliser is fair trade. There is no Government here. Now and then a man-of-war steams up and returns. The Consul was absent, but still all lived in unity and concord. . . ."

"Two hundred and fifty miles above the Kwa the Lukanga is discovered, which leads us into Lake Mantumba, whose *populous shores must not be neglected by the future trader in the Upper Congo.* . . ."

Bolobo, with its great trading population of 40,000 souls, is reduced to-day to a place of 7000 broken people. Its flourishing industries have vanished. Irebu, the "Venice of the Congo,"

whose inhabitants were versed in all the subtleties of the African trade, has totally disappeared; a military camp occupies its ancient site. Of the natives of the Aruwimi country, Vice-Consul Mitchell recently reported that they regard themselves as "practically enslaved; the incessant call for rubber, food, and labour leaves them no respite nor peace of mind." Death and decay mark the "populous shores" of Lake Mantumba; its former inhabitants have been extirpated by rubber wars, fish taxes and forced copal collection. Never, perhaps, in two short decades has such havoc been wrought in the destinies of a native people.

The same testimony to the commercial capacities of the Congo races breaks through every discourse made by Stanley, hot-foot from Africa, in which he pleads before British audiences the cause of the International Association.

"The clever, practical people of Manchester ask me: '*And what can the natives give us in exchange for our cloth?*' I answer that the country is peopled by about 43,000,000 of native Africans,* who, from our experience among a million of them, lead us to believe will prove as amenable to reason and prudent treatment as any natives we have encountered. As we have ascertained that along 2030 miles of river bank there dwell 806,300, we may estimate, then, that 2,448,300 souls inhabit the banks of the navigable mileage of 6000 miles, or 12,000 miles of river shore. These 12,000 miles of Congo banks excel in quality the sea shore. In this book I speak of having found oil palms and rubber creepers, the dyeing powder of the redwood and of the orchilla weeds, of

* Probably over-estimated by ten millions. I am convinced from an elaborate examination of all existing reports, and by numerous conversations with Congo officials, British and American missionaries, and British Consuls, that the entire population of the Congo, to-day, does not exceed 8½ to 9 millions.

copal deposits and forests of gum-producing trees at every place I visited. *I speak of eager native traders following us for miles for the smallest piece of cloth. I mention that after travelling many miles to obtain cloth for ivory and redwood powder, the despairing natives asked, 'Well, what is it you do want? Tell us and we will get it for you.'*"

"The Congo possesses forty millions of moderately industrious and workable people, which the Red Indians never were. The cautious trader, who advances not without the means of retreat; the *enterprising mercantile factor, who receives the raw produce from the native in exchange for the finished product of the manufacturer's loom;* the European middleman, who has his home in Europe but has his heart in Africa, is the man who is wanted. . . ."

"Whatever interest we may possess, after all, in this many-hued splendour of the tropic bush, in the variegated beauty and overflowing vegetable life on these river isles, in the bountiful wealth of the Congo forests, it is but secondary to that which we must feel for the human communities, the muscles of whose members have a more immediate and practical use of us. For without them the flowers, plants, gums, and the dye woods of the tropical world *must ever remain worthless to them and to ourselves.* . . ."

"We wish to secure *equal rights* for all, *and the utmost freedom of commerce.* . . . Commerce cannot expand in a new-born region like the Congo if not relieved of all fear of that dread Portuguese tariff. The purpose of the Association is *to compel commerce and industry to follow it eagerly by the very inviting* prospects held before commercial and industrial enterprise. . . ."

And as a final quotation from Stanley's writings and speeches, one may give the remarkable prophecy which, unknown to himself, he uttered when

urging, four years later, Emin Pasha to take service under the Congo State flag—

"Now consider the Congo State, which has extended itself much more rapidly than Egyptian. . . . Not a shot has been fired, no violence has been offered to either native or trader, not a tax has been levied, except at the seaport where the trader embarks his exports. Native chiefs . . . united under the blue flag with the golden star. Why? . . . every eatable they could raise and sell brought its full value to them of such clothing and other necessaries as they needed. Whatever trade they had—ivory, rubber, palm oil, or kernels—was free and untaxed, and their native customs, or domestic matters, were not interfered with. It was founded without violence, and subsists without violence. *When*, however, the Congo State initiates another policy, taxes their (the natives') trade, lays hands upon ivory as a Government monopoly, meddles with their domestic institutions, absorbs tyrannically all the profits of the European trader . . . gathers about its stations sufficient physical force to enable it to do so with impunity, the *Congo State will collapse* just as disastrously and as suddenly as was the case with Egyptian authority."

But it is not only Stanley whose words stand out as an enduring condemnation of those who, in the face of the world, seek to-day to perpetuate the legend of a race with no conception of property or commerce, "sunk in incurable idleness," * "essentially lazy and indifferent," † "not entitled to anything," ‡ "only respecting the law of force and knowing no other argument than terror." §

* M. Woeste, dictator of the majority in the Belgian Parliament (in the Belgian House, 1906).

† King Leopold in bidding adieu to a party of British Catholic missionaries (in 1905).

‡ M. de Smet de Naeyer, ex-Belgian Premier (in the Belgian House, 1906).

§ President of the Supreme Court of Justice in the Congo (in 1903, Caudron judgment).

Mr. Herbert Ward writes, for example, in his well-known book—

"The rocky banks and tree-hidden bogs concealed no worse foe than the keen Bateke or Byanzi trader, thirsting, not for the white man's blood, but for his cotton cloths and bright brass rods, and anxious only to get the better of him in bargaining."

The Belgian traveller Coquilhat, writing in 1886, bears witness to the fact that the trade in ivory was already well understood as far inland as the Lulanga. He describes in detail the lengthy bargaining process habitual with Bangala traders. He enumerates the goods paid to a native trader for a tusk 63 lbs. in weight,* and adds:—

"I admit that under present conditions of trade the natives must be imbued with great enterprise to explain their lengthy business travels and their opening of relations with distant tribes. The inhabitants of the Upper Congo have never seen the coast. The trading tribes travel 120 to 150 miles north and south of their homes and exchange their produce with other tribes who, in turn, sell it to others—thus there are numerous intermediaries."

The trade with the Lower Congo had led to the introduction of a regular currency in red copper all along the upper river. This red copper came from the copper mines in the French Congo (Manyanga). With the advent of Europeans into the upper river, brass rods soon superseded the red copper currency. Similarly, in the Kasai district the *croisette*, or piece of metal in the form

* One length of blue cloth, 2 of blue cotton, 2 of white cloth, 1 empty bottle, two iron buckets, 1 bell, 1 small mirror, 1 length of cloth, 1 fork, 1 spoon, 1 plate, 300 cowries, 6 measures of pink beads, 120 lengths of brass wire.

of St. Andrew's cross, had been introduced, probably for several centuries, by the Portuguese. In the Cataracts district small pieces of native cloth, manufactured from palm or pineapple fibre; in some parts of the main river the Bohemian blue bead, "matar"; in the Luababa and round Lake Albert the natives, like the early Romans, used iron hoe-heads of local manufacture as currency; in the Welle, cowries had found their way from the East Coast, and were adopted as currency; in the Katanga the well-known copper cross held sway.

What clearer proof could be adduced of an essentially trading population, whose present rulers, nevertheless, tell the world is too degraded to accept silver tokens with the features of an alien and benign over-lord stamped upon them?

Sir Harry Johnston (then Mr. Johnston), writing in 1884, refers to the sale of ivory by the Bangala to the Bayanzi (Byanzi) for "cloth, beads, and guns." The Bayanzi would seem to have been at that time the real ivory merchants of the Upper Congo. They travelled large distances in their canoes, and bought from all who would sell. They disposed of the ivory to the Batekes—who were, above all, middlemen—against European goods, chiefly cloth and salt, obtained by the Batekes from the Ba-Congo caravans to which they sold the ivory brought from the Bayanzi. The Bayanzi, having got rid of their ivory, then started up river again with European goods on a further trading expedition, taking due care, doubtless, to make a substantial commission on the sale. The evidence which is available shows that the Batekes at this period often held very large stocks of cloth—sufficient bales to fill several huts from floor

to ceiling. Apart from trade requirements they used a good deal of cloth themselves for funeral purposes.*

Captain Hanssens (*vide* Chapter IV.), writing in 1882, calls attention to the trade in ivory at Stanley Pool between the Bateke and Bayanzi.

Belgians do not contest the fact that the natives of the Kasai and Kwango were selling large quantities of rubber and ground-nuts to Europeans through native middlemen merchants long before the International Association was created. Until European merchants, as stated in Chapter V., moved up the river, most of this rubber eventually found its way to Ambrizette and Kinsembo; with their advent into the lower river, the trade was gradually deflected towards Ango-Ango, Kola-Kola, and Matadi.

The ground-nut trade dates back a considerable period. It was (and still is, what remains of it)† largely in the hands of the Dutch House ("N. A. H. V."). It is noteworthy that as early as 1882 the Dutch House was trading directly with the natives in rubber, ivory, and ground-nuts at Stanley Pool.‡

I have purposely refrained from referring to the

* It seems a well-established fact throughout tropical Africa that the more winding sheets can be wrapped round the body of a defunct, the greater is the evidence of the respect in which he was held by his relatives. It is even now considered an outrage on the Congo to bury a body without a covering of some sort. These ideas are closely connected, of course, with ancestral worship, which forms the basis of nearly all natural African religions, and is another reason explaining the veneration of the people for their land.

† In the lower river only, of course.

‡ "Ground-nut cultivation was universal throughout the Cataracts region. The natives sold the nuts to the European trading stations for salt, which they sold to the tribes in the interior for rubber."—(Bulletin Officiel, June, 1896.)

bulky evidence available as to the natural trading instincts of the natives which is provided by the testimony extant at this period of the ramifications of their internal trade in fish, pottery, basket work, cowries, salt, copper, iron, agricultural implements, weapons of war and chase, and so on, for these articles do not form part of the Congo's exportable produce having commercial value on the markets of the world. This internal trade lies, therefore, outside the present discussion, save in the general sense of indicating the normal existence of trading proclivities amongst the natives.

In conclusion, there is hardly a Protocol of the Berlin Conference which does not bear witness on the part of the Plenipotentiaries of the Great Powers to a knowledge of the existence at that period of a large Afro-European trade in natural produce on the Congo, and of a desire to place the native in a position to develop it still further, not only in peace and freedom, but unhampered even by monopolies and tariffs.

As has been remarked already, the proceedings at Berlin would, in view of their professed object, have been deprived of *raison d'être* but for the conviction held by all the Powers that in the population of the Congo, the Western world had to deal, in the words used by Stanley himself at the Conference, with a race of "born traders," gathering the produce of their ancestral lands for the European markets in the necessarily limited manner then open to them, and eagerly awaiting the increased demand for their produce and the increased facilities for disposing of it, which would accompany the white man's establishment in the upper river.

Yet in December of last year M. Woeste, leader of the parliamentary majority in Belgium, declared to the House that neither commerce nor industry were known to the Congo natives before the creation of the "Congo Free State."

CHAPTER VII

THE EXPANSION OF THE INTERIOR TRADE WHICH FOLLOWED THE CREATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION UNTIL ITS EXTINCTION BY THE EDICTS OF 1891-92

"Before the constitution of the Congo State the activity of the natives was confined to inter-tribal warfare and the slave-trade."—M. DE SMET DE NAEYER in the Belgian House.

WITH the recognition of the International Association by the Great Powers, and the entry among the family of States of a "Free State" of the Congo, purporting to have as its load-star the civilisation of Africa by "encouragement to legitimate trade," Stanley's predictions to the natives as to the increased facilities for the disposal of their produce which would follow the acceptance of the Association's suzerainty, were realised.

Trading companies were formed, whose directing spirits were Americans, Belgians, Dutchmen, Englishmen, and Frenchmen (the capital being mainly Belgian), using Stanley Pool as their base of operations, and founding station after station along the main river and its tributaries.

The newcomers found by personal experience (as Stanley had himself proclaimed) how eager was the native population to increase its commercial relations with the white man; and how

well-acquainted were many of the riverine tribes with the intricacies of the West African trading business. Ivory and rubber were eagerly bought and sold. Where the natives had not become acquainted with the European demand for rubber, rubber-bearing trees and vines were pointed out to them, and they seized with alacrity * upon this means of enriching themselves—just as, throughout the modern commercial history of the whole of Western Africa, the natives have acted in regard to rubber and other articles of commercial value, whenever the demands of European industry became known to them, and markets became accessible to them.

The argument which has so frequently been heard in the Belgian Parliament, and which, moreover, is incorporated in the laws of the Congo State, to the effect that because the native tribes of many parts of the Congo territory were not aware of the commercial value of rubber before the white man actually arrived amongst them, therefore they were not, and are not, entitled to trade in it when its commercial value became known to them, is the argument of the Vandal. If it is applicable to rubber in the Upper Congo, it is applicable to every other article of export from every part of tropical and sub-tropical Africa. If the twentieth-century civilisation of Western Europe is prepared to admit that the act of

* In a letter to the writer, written two years ago, Mrs. Ruskin, wife of the well-known missionary of that name, thus describes the beginning of the rubber trade at Bongandanga, on the Lopori river, 1500 miles from the coast: "It is most interesting to hear the Bongandanga people tell of the beginning of the rubber trade. How wonderful they thought it, that the white man should want rubber and be willing to pay for it. How they almost fought for the baskets in order to bring it in and obtain the offered riches."

revealing the wealth of their land to races less advanced justifies the appropriation of that wealth by the revealer, then, indeed, are we witnessing a reversion to ideas more barbarous than those of the primitive peoples of the equatorial forest.* Yet the Belgian Government is perpetuating this monstrous conception.

By 1890 trading stations were dotted up and down the Congo as far as the Aruwimi, the Mongalla (Black River), the Maringa, Lopori, Ituri,† etc.,† and trade was expanding rapidly.‡

Writing in 1887–8 of the Sankuru (the great eastern affluent of the Kasai) Dr. Wolf (Wissman's companion) calls it "a very important fluvial route from the commercial point of view." The ivory trade had penetrated even to this distant region. "We saw," writes the German traveller, "natives arriving with ivory nearly each day." On the other hand, the Sankuru natives had not then become acquainted with the value of rubber as a trading article.

"In the Kasai," writes a Belgian authority a year or two later, "the ardour of the natives for trade is not less. The steamers which ply along the river are

* There is a passage in Father Vermeersch's book worthy of note in this regard. He describes the argument in question as "radically false, and, in our opinion, contrary to all the rules of European law. The owner of the soil is entitled to the enjoyment of all its fruits, both those which he is actually using, or those which later knowledge or opportunity may cause him to use. . . . Where would the contrary principle lead us to?" But, as has been shown in Chapter IV., the European rulers of the Congo regard themselves as owners of the soil—not the natives.

† Vide *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* (E. D. Morel); quoted extracts from letters of merchants in the Upper Congo.

‡ According to M. Wauters, the total of rubber exported from the upper river, which had been 30,650 kilos in 1887, rose to 133,600 kilos in 1890.

followed nearly every day by natives who, paddling hard to keep abreast, offer produce of all kinds. On the banks the same sight is seen when the steamers pass the landing places of the villages, which become covered with a sympathetic crowd exhibiting native cloths, wood for fuel, goats, fowls, bananas, manioca, etc."

In 1901 the blow fell. The infamous Edicts were promulgated by which the produce of the land was declared to be the property of the Government; the natives who collected it for sale to the white man, denounced as poachers upon the property of others; the white man who bought it, denounced as a receiver of stolen goods and threatened with condign punishment.

Only several years later, when an instructed public opinion compelled attention to the root cause of the abominations which were occurring all over the Congo, was the "juridical" defence put forward for this sweeping appropriation, enforced by violence, of the commercial produce of the Congo, viz., that the land outside the sites of towns and villages and adjacent food plantations possesses no native owners, and hence the produce of the land is the property of the Administration and its financial partners.

It would be going beyond the limits I have set myself to deal with the immediate effects of this economic revolution. Suffice it to say that the merchants protested; that M. Beernaert, M. Emile Banning, and Baron Lambermont signed a joint demonstration to the King; that the Governor-General, M. Janssen, resigned;* that Colonel Thys, Messrs. Brugmann, Urban, Parminter, and Wauters, the pioneers of honest Belgian trade in

* Cattier, p. 63.

the Upper Congo, filled the Belgian Press with their denunciations.

"To deny," declared these gentlemen, "to the natives the right to sell ivory and rubber produced by the forests and plains belonging to their tribes, which forests and plains form part of their hereditary natal soil, and with which they have traded from time immemorial, is a veritable violation of natural rights."

But no governing statesman seemed at the time to have perceived the vital principles at stake or to have realised the inevitable aftermath. No one arose to instruct public opinion. Belgian protests against the actions of Belgium's ruler were regarded as a family squabble, and the Belgian trading companies, which held out as long as they could, were forced, unsupported, to come to terms. *

The system thus inaugurated was prosecuted with relentless vigour and machine-like regularity; the Congo territory became a gigantic property pillaged by slave labour for the benefit of a handful of individuals in Brussels and Antwerp—the scene of unimaginable atrocities, enormous depopulation, and appalling human misery. Concurrently with the daily consequences of a system of exploitation pursued in the Congo which recalled the darkest periods of the Middle Ages, the apathy of the Great Powers bred a corresponding feeling of security among the beneficiaries of the system in Belgium who, with every year that passed, avowed their aims with increasing cynicism, and defended their "System" with increasing boldness, until, little by little, the mask of a philanthropic purpose was wholly flung aside.

* In doing so, says Professor Cattier, they "sacrificed the future."

By 1903 the "Congo Free State" had advanced sufficiently on the path of avowal to describe itself publicly as the "owner" and "landlord" of the land of the Congo and its commercial products, to contend that these commercial products were *its property* and not the constituents of commercial dealing between the native population and the outer world, and that *it* and *its* financial partners had appropriated the *whole of the land.*

"The (British) Note confuses trade with the development of *his* property by a *landlord.* The native who gathers products for account of the *owner* does not become the owner of the harvested products, and, naturally, cannot dispose of them to others. . . . As a matter of fact, however, the appropriation of lands worked on Government account, or by the Concessionnaire Companies, is an accomplished fact. . . . *There are no longer any unappropriated lands there* (in the Congo)." *

Thus was the colossal act of piracy shamelessly avowed and the passage of Tacitus made applicable, on their own showing, to the rulers of the Congo—

"Auferre, trucidare, rapere falsis nominibus imperium, atque ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant."

It is necessary to recall once more that the legitimacy of this system of pillage has been and continues to be consistently defended by successive Belgian ministers and by the political party then, and still, in power under the leadership of M. Woeste. The Belgian Parliamentary Debates for 1903 and onwards contain sufficient testimony to this effect to fill a substantial volume.†

* Congo State's Memorandum, September 17, 1903, replying to Lord Lansdowne's Note. See Part III.

† See Part III.

No surprise need be felt, therefore, if to-day the Belgian Government (and its Parliamentary majority) having annexed the Congo, is perpetuating, in the name of Belgium, the system which its predecessors in office defended, upheld, and covered with the mantle of a moral complicity.

I make bold to have established—

I. That the native races of the Congo had utilised the produce of their land, having commercial value in the European markets, for purposes of trade and commerce from time immemorial.

II. That this interchange of commercial relations between the native races and the outer world, based upon the utilisation by the natives of the produce of their lands, had become considerable, and had acquired wide ramifications when Stanley, Hanssens, and others, negotiated the Treaties of Suzerainty with the native rulers on behalf of the International Association, and was giving rise to native activity over, at least, a thousand miles of river frontage in the interior of the Congo : that it had already led, in many parts of the country, to the creation of a currency.

III. That upon the advent of European merchants into the upper river subsequent to the recognition of the International Association by the Powers, the area of this commercial relationship widened still further; natives who had already participated in it, and those who had not had until then the opportunity of doing so, alike embracing the new conditions with great eagerness.

CHAPTER VIII

NATIVE LAND TENURE IN THE CONGO

"Ownership cannot be recognised to a few wandering tribes."—M. BEERNAERT in the Belgian House, April, 1908.

IN defending their appropriation of the produce of the soil, possessing commercial value on the markets of Europe, by alleging the non-existence of native ownership in land outside the limits of native villages and food plantations, the present European rulers of the Congo are not only violating the Treaties with native rulers, thanks to which and to the consent of the Great Powers, they come to be in the position they now claim. Nor are they only infringing International Treaty rights. They are also acting in opposition to recorded facts as to native laws and customs on the Congo—partly made public by their own countrymen; partly, indeed, by their own officials. Finally, they are acting in opposition to ordinary civilised usage.

Except in the French Congo, during late years, where a slightly modified form of the Belgian system has unhappily been adopted,* the rights of suzerainty obtained by the Great Powers over native communities, and the administration exercised by them, are utilised and directed to the

* See Chapter XVII.

extension and improvement of commercial relations between their African protected subjects and the outer world.

They have not pirated the wealth of their native subjects, and they have not, therefore, found it necessary to defend such piracy by the preposterous contention that native ownership in land stops at the threshold of the native's hut, and at the limit of his banana grove or cassava farm. They have, on the contrary, assisted and encouraged the native to harvest the natural produce of his forests and his plains; to collect his rubber and his gum copal, his palm oil and his palm kernels; to cultivate his cocoa, his ground nuts, maize and cotton for export; to hew down his mahogany tree. They are now teaching him to improve his methods of cultivation and preparation; inducing him to make plantations of valuable economic plants,* to replace the exhaustion of wild ones; helping him to understand that not only his actual prosperity but his future welfare are bound up in his land and its fruits.

In truth, this so-called land "question" is largely artificial. The question of native tenure in land on the Congo has become of vital import to the native races—and, incidentally, to civilisation—*only* because the European rulers of the Congo lay claim to ownership of the land's produce, justifying their claim on the ground that the land

* As M. Roume's *Arrêté*, of February 1, 1905, puts it: "In the rubber-producing regions, plantations can be made round the village . . . by the care of, and for the profit of, their inhabitants. These plantations . . . will be regarded as the communal property of the inhabitants who will look after them." (M. Roume was then Governor-General of French West Africa.) Our own methods are sufficiently well known not to require illustration.

is without native owners—"vacant." Viewed by itself this appropriation on paper by a number of gentlemen sitting in Brussels, of hundreds of thousands of square miles of land in the African tropics, is an absurdity. The land of the Congo is of no use to the Belgian Government or its financial friends. *The Belgian Government cannot occupy the land; it cannot place its own citizens upon the land; its own citizens cannot populate the land or harvest its riches. The Belgian Government can do nothing with the land of the Congo.* The fact that the late Congo Government claimed the land—by a mere act of volition—and that the Belgian Government perpetuates that claim—again, by a mere act of volition—does not alter the position of a single tree, the growth of a single vine, the course of a single stream on the Congo. It does not do away, *in fact*, with native ownership in the land. It does not annul the immemorial rights of the native population nor destroy its tribal boundaries and tenure. In itself the claim is the negation of common-sense. It is only because of the purpose for which it is advanced that necessity arises to demonstrate that it is the negation alike of morality and of law.

It would seem not inadvisable to recall these truths, in view of the statements that have been made during the past few months to the effect that, in order to undo what has been done, the Belgian Government would be compelled to take a concerted series of measures of the most formidable and perplexing character; that the land of the Congo has been appropriated *in fact*; that it has been actually handed over to others who are now using and occupying it; that an original

expropriation at the expense of the natives would have to be followed by another expropriation, this time at the expense of Europeans; that a new Government cannot be expected to adopt such far-reaching measures save by slow degrees, and so on. This is but a series of attempts to beg the question. The land of the Congo has remained as it was before the Belgians arrived in the country. Just as the claim to it is a paper claim, so the issue of fresh paper can rescind that claim; just as the claim is a mere act of volition (not a constructive administrative measure involving the sinking of large sums in the erection of public works, extensive systems of irrigation or agricultural experiments on a large scale); so, by a mere act of volition, the claim can be abandoned. Save in the infinitesimal areas where Government or Concession stations have been built, or Government and Concessionnaire rubber and coffee plantations established, the land is neither occupied nor utilised by Europeans. In itself the abandonment of the claim over the land would alter nothing *on the Congo*. All that such action would do would be to deprive the Belgian Government, for polemical purposes in Europe, of its "juridical" defence to the appropriation of the produce of the land having commercial value on the world's markets.

The position on the Congo will not be changed until the Belgian Government ceases to treat, in practice, the produce of the land as its *property, and ceases to compel the native population to harvest that produce for the joint benefit of itself and its financial partners. In other words, nothing will be changed on the Congo until commercial relations between the natives and the outer world, destroyed by the Edicts*

of 1891–92, *are restored; and these can only be restored by recognising, in practice, the proprietary rights of the natives in the fruits of the soil; until, in fine, European rule on the Congo ceases to be represented by a parasitical Administration, maintaining itself and permitting its financial partners to enrich themselves by the systematic pillage of the country's wealth through the slave labour of the country's inhabitants, and becomes an Administration in the proper sense of the term.**

It has been remarked above that native ownership in land must needs be the foundation stone of all normal European rule in the African tropics, because the economic object of normal European rule is the development of commercial relations, and because any commercial relationship between the European and the native is impossible, unless the native has articles to sell with which to purchase manufactured goods—those articles being the products of his land having commercial value on the markets of the world.

The British Government has pointed out † that: "On the West *Coast* of Africa, fairly well-defined tribal divisions have existed almost from time immemorial." These "tribal divisions" are not peculiar to the "Coast" regions. They extend right through the forest belt which separates the coast from the uplands of the interior. They extend to those uplands. The Land Tenure Commission, which sat recently at the Colonial Office to investigate the question as it affects Northern Nigeria, has found that the same rule holds good, both for the Mohammedan and Pagan zones in that great protectorate which reaches to the shores

* See Chapter XV. † Africa, No. 5, 1908.

of Lake Chad. Nor is a well-defined tenure in land peculiar to the British possessions. It is common to the whole vast area of Western Africa wherever there is population; to whatever European overlordship the country has become subjected since the "Scramble."

And it is equally common to the Congo region, as will be here shown.

Speaking generally, throughout tropical Africa there is no such thing as unowned * land, where there is population. The public writings of the most authorised exponents of Native Customary Law in tropical Africa—Ellis, Sarbah, Mary Kingsley, Ballay, De Brazza, Clozel, Binger, Vilamur, Delafosse, Rayner,† Healy,‡ Dareste, Bohn, Blyden, Zimmerman: the universal experience (much of it

* A moment's consideration suffices to show the dishonesty—from another standpoint—of describing, in Europe, land in Africa as "Vacant," "Unowned," "Unoccupied," as a justification for appropriating the produce which grows upon it, when it is borne in mind that this produce could not be obtained by the appropriators if the land were "vacant." The theory, indeed, is self-destructive. As M. Messimy, the reporter for the French Colonial Budget (see Appendix) judiciously remarks in his condemnation of the concession system: "Lands which are truly 'vacant' are inexploitable for lack of labour." But the fact that there is no such thing—or very rarely—as "vacant land" in native customary law does not mean that it is impossible or inexpedient for European administrations, by arrangements with the local rulers, to create forest reserves; to acquire leases for specific purposes; to introduce European enterprise, which shall, in co-operation with native enterprise, regulate and systematise production; to take preventive measures against too frequent and careless bush-firing; to set aside specific areas for experimental purposes; and, in short, to carry out the natural work of an honest administration. All this can be done, and is being done, in many parts of Western Africa—notably in Southern Nigeria—without undermining or ignoring native tenure, and, in the measure in which the native has confidence in the white man's honesty of purpose, he assists the white man in these efforts. The last Forestry Report for Southern Nigeria may be profitably perused.

† Quoted by Dareste.

‡ Quoted by Dareste.

recorded) of African administrators, missionaries and merchants—are conclusive, and cover virtually the whole of Western Africa from the Senegal to the Congo.

And what form does this native land tenure, this native ownership in land which no one disputes except—so far as the Congo territory is concerned—the Belgian Government and its interested allies, actually take? Here, again, the evidence is voluminous and conclusive. With few exceptions, native tenure takes the form of communal ownership of the land and its fruits; a form proper to the condition of native society where the whole social structure is patriarchal and communistic, outcome of inherent usage, immemorial custom and racial necessities. In certain regions, a feudalism has developed and the land is owned by the King and nobles; but this is the exception. In certain regions, too, individual tenure is found existing side by side with communal ownership; but this also is the exception. In Mohammedan Northern Nigeria, communism has developed into nationalisation. This native ownership in land, which is admitted and recognised, is, then, communal in form.

Does a different state of affairs prevail on the Congo? Does a practice common to the whole of the tropical regions of Africa outside a certain territory—which passed under the suzerainty of the King of the Belgians precisely because his agents produced documents to prove that the native rulers did possess rights over the land and its produce—stop short at the frontiers of this territory?

All the Belgian authorities on Congo affairs

answer these queries in the negative. Indeed, the Belgian Government has but to consult the works of its own compatriots to find in the facts they adduce an implicit condemnation of its fantastic theories. Belgian experts in Belgium, Belgian officials, Belgian missionaries, Belgian travellers, are in accord with foreign consuls, missionaries, and travellers.

Father Vermeersch, who has access to the reports of the Belgian missionaries on the Congo, has, perhaps, summed up the situation there obtaining better than any other Belgian authority with the exception of the leader of the Belgian Labour Party, M. Emile Vandervelde, and M. Georges Lorand, the Leader of the Progressive wing of the Liberal Parliamentary party.* He has been assisted in his task of exposition in Belgium by Fathers Cus and Van Hencxthoven—missionaries with a lengthened Congo experience.

"The natives," writes Father Vermeersch, "interpret property in collective form; the community being the village or tribe. This tenure extends over all the territory, in which the Chief exercises jurisdiction. The limits are clearly defined. It suffices to put this question, 'To whom does this land belong?' to obtain the answer, 'It belongs to such and such a Chief, as far as such and such a place.' . . . Among the Congo natives, occupation is, no doubt, usually collective; but this occupation is as entitled to respect as any form of individual occupation. Land cannot be assumed to be vacant. In Africa the forests belong to the tribes."

Father Vermeersch declares—and this testimony, which is most important, is corroborated

* The two Members of the Belgian House who really understand the question.

by the British missionaries*—that the Catholic Missions have usually made arrangements direct with the Native rulers when founding their stations, and he asserts that they never experienced any difficulties in obtaining the lease of sites for the purpose.† Quoting from a report sent him by the Belgian Mission in the Kwango, Father Vermeersch says—

"In the portion of the Kwango where we have laboured for twenty-three years, the land and the forests are the secular property of the natives. I am told that it is the same in the Upper Kwango and Kasai."

So far as the Kasai is concerned, this is corroborated in letters I possess from the American missionaries.

"To whom," continues Father Vermeersch, "does the rubber which grows upon the land occupied by the natives belong? To the natives and to no one else without their consent and without just compensation. We acknowledge with much regret that the appropriation by the State of so-called vacant lands on the Congo confronts us with an immense expropriation."

And the Belgian Father quotes the jurist, Van Bluntschli—

"Territorial sovereignty does not infer ownership of the soil. But by virtue of its sovereignty the State has the right to dispose of the land which is without owners."

I am not competent to judge of the juridical authority of this writer, but the passage quoted

* See the continuation of this chapter.

† In other words, they have acted in conformity with the Decrees of Governors-General Sir Francis de Winton and Cam Janssens, already quoted, issued at a time when the European rulers of the Congo had not patented their theory of non-native ownership in land.

is almost * identical with Stanley's Treaty with the Chiefs of Palaballa.

Professor Cattier is no less emphatic. He terms the system inaugurated by the Edicts of 1891–92 the "organisation of spoliation."

M. Emile Vandervelde, fresh from his visit of investigation to the Congo, speaking in the Belgian Parliament last year, said—

"The State has the right to appropriate vacant lands: agreed. But are there any vacant lands on the Congo? It is possible, in certain desert regions. But what I can affirm is that I saw none. No doubt the greater portion of the land is not covered by native villages or native plantations; but it can be asserted that, with exceptions which are, moreover, supposititious, the whole of the territory is divided between the different communities. When one visits a chief nothing is easier than to find out where his territory ends and that of another chief begins. . . . In fine, they use the collective territory of the community according to their ancient traditions." †

These are statements of a general character, either based upon personal experience or upon information derived from a variety of local sources. If we pass to the records of Belgians dealing with specific parts of the territory, we shall not find them less significant.

M. Schmitz, who is certainly not partial towards the critics of the Congo administration, writing ‡ on the strength of personal residence among various sections of the great Bashonge § people, after

* See Chapter IV.

† *Annales Parlementaires du* 17 Dec. 1908.

‡ *Les attaques contre le Congo*, 1908.

§ Closely allied with the Batetla and Baluba, and occupying a large extent of territory stretching from the Sankuru to the Lualaba.

recording that land is held in communal tenure, goes on to say—

"You will never hear a Musongo, not even a chief, say, 'This land is mine.' He will say, 'This land is ours,' and by this he means, not the population of his village, but the whole tribe. . . . The country belongs entirely to the tribe. . . . The tribes are very susceptible on the subject of their territory; their boundaries are traditional but most precise."

He produces tangible proof of native customary law in these respects in the following passage—

"To-day the tribes lease their rubber forests. Thus the Bena-Lubunda lease to the Bena-Kiai the right of collecting rubber in their forests. The chiefs of the Bena-Kiai pay two belts of cowries and a cap-gun every month. The Bakele in 1906 leased to the Bala the rubber in their forests for five guns, one woman, and two goats."*

The Rev. J. Kenred Smith supplies me with valuable confirmation on this point. He writes—

"Some time after the advent of the rubber *régime* in the Mongalla district, several villages of considerable size moved much nearer to Upoto,† and it is interesting to learn that in three cases at least, the natives coming from a distance paid a definite sum to the chief of the country to which they came for the right of settling down in the neighbourhood. Thus I am informed that the people of Ndeke paid to Likala, the Chief of Boela, a large number of spears and knives for the right to the land, it being understood that in shifting their village from time to time, or in making new gardens, they must not claim land nearer Boela than the streams of Mombwa and Mondongo. The Bombilo people paid to

* For further corroboration of this system of leasing communal lands, see the evidence of the Rev. E. Scrivener, further on.

† The English Mission Station.

Bombunga, the Chief of Bosogbete, spears and knives for the right to settle near him when they came into this immediate neighbourhood. They seem also to have possessed the use of the stream Njongobono for water for drinking purposes and for their use in soaking the native manioc root in the preparation of the native bread. Although miles nearer Upoto than formerly, the Bombilo people still claim their ancient hunting ground and hunt in their old area. The people of Kanya, I also learn, gave Abali, the Chief of Bosokuluki, spears and knives for the right of settling near him when they rebuilt their town in this neighbourhood."

Nothing could be more significant of the truth of what was urged above, viz. : that the wave of alien oppression and violence which has swept over the country has not affected native customary law. The natives have bowed before the blast, they have died in enormous numbers, they are perishing from misery, disease and want—but they cling with the unfailing tenacity of one of the most conservative races on earth to their own customary laws.

The German traveller, Von Wissmann, writing of the same region also records the communistic character of native society—

"All the families," he says, "of the quarter (of the town) attend to the harvest in common. . . . No discussion, no quarrels; each and all take according to their wants."

The same observations are made of the Ababua people by a number of Belgian officials whose notes have been published by Professor Halkin, of Liége University.* Here are some of these notes—

"The family is the basis of the organisation of

* In 1907, and including the evidence of Verstraeten, Vedy, Tilkens, De La Kethulle de Ryhove, etc.

Society. . . . The family spirit is very much developed. . . . Communal lands are delimited by a stream, one or more over-turned trees, or by some peculiarity in the formation of the ground."

Of the Mayombe people * the testimony is similar—

"While all the common plantations are the property of the village or centre . . . each little square planted with tobacco, carefully marked out, has its owner." †

Father De Clercq writes of the same people—

"For commercial purposes the territory is divided into sections of different sizes, each is overseen by a village or tribal chief. . . . Tradition decides. No artificial boundary separates these commercial domains, but if one village robbed the palm trees of another it would be an act of war." ‡

The same author also says—

"The Mayombe country is divided into an infinity of regions, each occupied by members of the same clan. . . . These regions have their precise boundaries, known and respected by the people. . . . They are bounded by a wood, a stream, a valley, a mountain. . . . If one village migrates into a region other than that of the clan, no great opposition will be made, but the inhabitants of that village will always feel as if they were the hosts of strangers, and will finally return to the country they have left."

M. Diederrich writes of the Mayombe—

"The ownership of the soil is communal." §

* Lower Congo; territory drained by the Shiloango, Lubuzi, and Lukula.

† Gilmont, *Congo belge.*

‡ *Missions en Chine et au Congo.*

§ Quoted in *Cyr van Overbergh*, p. 371.

We obtain a sidelight on the custom of one tribe to give hospitality to another upon its communal lands in Consul Casement's report, where he recounts the experiences of the refugees from Lake Leopold II., who had sought and found an asylum from the persecution of the European officials, on the communal lands of the "K," near Bolobo.* The Rev. A. E. Scrivener, of the British Baptist Missionary Society, who has had twenty years' experience in various parts of the Congo, gives me the following additional information on the above †—

"At Bolobo," he writes, "the Moye and Bobangi folk, living on the river banks, paid rent for years to the Batende, who lived a little way inland. This was discontinued in my time, and led to much trouble between them—such as the stoppage of all trade, the cessation of markets, and so on. On the French side, the folk inhabiting a long, low stretch of bank, flooded out regularly every year, could not shift their quarters, as the owners of the higher lands refused to grant sites. I am not defending their attitude, but merely quoting it as evidence of the way the country was parcelled out. When I visited the Lake I was pointed out the territories of the chiefs who had fled to Bolobo for refuge. Men who were then living under sufferance among the Batende had once held sway over many square miles. There were well-recognised boundaries, such as streams and watersheds. Even under the rule of the State this still obtained and made it necessary, sometimes, for people who had no rubber vines on their own lands to buy permission to collect rubber on the lands of other peoples." ‡

* "Africa," No. 1, 1904, p. 28, and p. 60. The "K" people are the Batende.

† Letter in the writer's possession.

‡ In the mad fear and horror which the rubber "tax" inspires, "permission" is often not asked, the "taxed" natives wandering distractedly wherever they can hope to find the vines, bloody feuds resulting. See evidence, further on.

A letter from Captain Hanssens (*op. cit.*), dated Leopoldville, October 5, 1882, further illustrates these native customary laws as to land. Explaining the presence of the Bateke Chief, Nga-Liewa, at Stanley Pool, where he had settled ten years before, Captain Hanssens says that he "had obtained from the paramount chief of the country permission to build a village in the bay of Kintamo."

The Rev. A. E. Scrivener in the same communication points out that—

"At Bolobo and Lukolela the mission sites were purchased in the first instance from the natives, before negotiations were begun with the State authorities. The site of Bolobo was purchased piecemeal from the various owners concerned as they became agreeable, we having, in the meanwhile, to confine our operations only to those parts purchased. I believe other sites were purchased in the same way."

The Rev. Charles Bond of the Congo Bololo Mission, who is also an old Congo resident, gives me the result of his experiences, which comprise the neighbourhood of Lolanga, the Lulongo River as far as Mampoko, the Ikelemba River as far as Boyenge, and the Congo as far as Monsembe.

"So far as my experience goes," he writes, "there are no vacant lands in any part of the country. Each town—or series of towns forming a district acknowledging one head chief—knows the extent of forest over which from time immemorial it has been the custom to hunt. The boundary, perhaps a creek, perhaps a path, a rising ground, or more frequently a stream, is the margin of the territory of the neighbouring tribe. In exactly the same way, the rivers and creeks are divided for fishing purposes . . . I have known not a few disputes over these old boundaries and hunting and fishing rights. As a consequence of the decrease of population they are

not so frequent now as they were five or seven years ago, but the boundaries are the same."

Writing of the Lopori-Maringa basin, the Rev. Charles Padfield, of the same mission, remarks :—

"In this district there is no such thing as 'unoccupied land.' The term is a complete misnomer. It is impossible to find a part of the forest which is not claimed under native law and custom. No stream which is not sectionalised for the use of specific communities. Not a single group of palm trees which is not owned by some village."

Vice-Consul Beak, writing of the Katanga region, says :— *

"Little or nothing is known locally of native land tenure, for the Congo official still remains strangely ignorant of all that concerns the native. But there are one or two obvious points which the system of land tenure in the Katanga would appear *to share in common with that obtaining in other parts of Africa* † . . . It may probably be safely said that individual property in land does not exist. The existence of collective property cannot be doubted. . . . The boundaries of these collective lands are frequently natural; more often they appear to be purely arbitrary. But they have been sanctioned by immemorial traditions, and they are perfectly well known and recognised to within a foot's length by the natives themselves. This fact is abundantly clear to any one travelling through the country, and it is corroborated by older residents. . . . It is the native custom for a chief to escort the white traveller to the boundary of his territory, and beyond that boundary it would not be becoming for him to pass."

The following notes, which have kindly been prepared for me by the Rev. John Harris, whose devoted labours in this cause both in the Congo as

* Africa, No. 1, 1908.

† See pp. 86 and 87.

a missionary and in England as organising secretary of the Congo Reform Association are well known, are instructive. They refer to the territories comprised within the Lopori and Maringa basins.

"On the surface, and in practice, the claim of the Congo State to communal lands and produce is as complete as it is general. At the same time, however, reposing beneath that surface are the native communal boundaries, as clearly defined to-day as for generations past. This fact frequently emerges and asserts itself, to the embarrassment of the Administration itself.

"When Monsieur X——, an official of the A.B.I.R. Company, destroyed the Baringa towns, the people could find no dwelling-place, because, on the south, all the land came within the original communal area of the Bokeri people, and, on the north, within that of the Ekala.

"The fishing rights on the river are equally well defined, an island generally dividing the fishing grounds; but even so, one end of the island is often occupied by one tribe and the other end by a different one.

"That these boundaries are well known and clearly recognised finds additional emphasis from the relations between the 'Bafoto'—little hunters (not pigmies)—and the resident population. These small, but very strong, people are essentially nomadic, seldom living in huts, but wandering to and fro from the Wambala to the Monpona districts, a distance of some three hundred miles. They spend their whole time hunting, and live almost entirely upon flesh, supplemented by forest nuts and edible roots. Before the great confiscation of lands and produce by the State, the chief of the hunters always sent 'toll,' in the shape of skins and tusks, to the tribe over whose lands he was at that time hunting.* Owing to the claim by the State and its Trusts to the ivory of the district, 'toll' in the shape of that article has become impossible, but the hunter-chief still loyally recognises his responsibility to the tribal landlord by sending larger supplies of meat and skins in lieu of ivory.

* See evidence of Schmitz and Scrivener.

"In general practice, tribal lands are divided by a stream, approximately half-way between two villages, and should the waters be so deep as to require a bridge, this must be built jointly by the two tribes, *i.e.* each building the near half, the last to finish being responsible for perfecting the 'joints.'"

Mr. Harris's evidence is, however, especially interesting, inasmuch as it accentuates a feature of the Congo System, a direct result of the appropriation of the produce of the soil by the Administration, to which my attention was first drawn some years ago by Belgian correspondents residing in rubber districts in the Upper Congo widely removed from one another, and which has since been frequently emphasised by a number of missionaries,* viz. the direct incitement to civil war which this System constitutes. It seems desirable to give more than a passing reference to this feature, if only to illustrate *one* specific effect produced upon the lives of the natives by the nefarious economic policy introduced into the Congo.

As the rubber growing upon the communal lands of one particular village, clan, or tribe, becomes exhausted, so the members of that village, clan, or tribe, "taxed" in this article, either by the Government or the *concessionnaires*, must pass its boundaries and invade the communal lands of another village, clan, or tribe, if they are to meet the demands made upon them, for the "tax" continues to be levied with the same brutal disregard of local conditions, and unless prominent attention has been drawn by the missionaries to an individual case, no excuses for shortage are accepted. The

* Notably by the Rev. Kenred Smith, in reports published by the Congo Reform Association.

imposed natives are, therefore, in this position : On the one side is the Belgian official and his soldiers demanding rubber ; the penalty for non-compliance varying from imprisonment in the hostage house, seizure of women and children, and the chain-gang, to violence, torture, incendiarism and murder. On the other, is the violation of custom in invading the communal lands of strangers, the risks attending it, the fear of reprisals. It is not astonishing that, placed between the devil of Belgian rapacity and the deep sea of tribal resentment, the potential danger of the latter is preferred to the immediate terrors of the former. Indeed, no option is left to the native but the infringement of his own deep-rooted customary laws. Sometimes the owners of the invaded territory are themselves "taxed" in rubber, and the result is a frantic struggle for possession of the vines between the invaded and the invaders. Sometimes the invaded tribe or village is an hereditary enemy of the invaders, and the result is murderous warfare. Sometimes, and several instances of such cases were cited by my Belgian correspondents, the invaders *malgré eux* are a vegetable-fish-eating tribe, and the invaded a cannibalistic tribe, and a result, to be added to the others, is a direct incitement to cannibalism as well as civil war. The ultimate consequences which follow from this forced inter-tribal warfare are endless : reprisals go on for years. Women are captured on either side, plantations destroyed, and so on. In short, the natives destroy one another for the benefit of the alien "landlord" in Brussels and Antwerp, in addition to being destroyed singly and collectively by that "landlord's" soldiers. The measure of human misery entailed by such a

System is not portrayable by a mere recording of the facts : neither is the measure of human wickedness in promoting it to be estimated by mere vigour of denunciation.

The specific instances given by Mr. Harris are so clear that they render lengthy quotations from other communications in my possession unnecessary. Mr. Harris writes :—

"(*a*) The genesis of the Yandjali massacre lay in the tribe which worked rubber for the State crossing the stream which, in point of fact, divided their communal lands from those of another tribe working rubber for the *concessionnaires*.

"(*b*) Owing to the intensity of the pressure upon the Bangala by the Mongalla Company, they were driven to seek rubber in the communal lands claimed by the A.B.I.R., thus creating constant internecine warfare between the Mongos and Bangalas. This condition of affairs brought the A.B.I.R. into frequent conflict with the Mongalla Company, which conflicts eventually forced the State itself to intervene and 'drive back' the natives within what had originally been their own communal lands.

"(*c*) The people of Ekerongo and Lifumba are at constant war with those of the Juapa, because the rubber being exhausted within what was once their communal lands, they now cross the boundary into that of the Juapa folk.

"(*d*) During the time of Mons. O—— * the people of Esanga crossed the river to search for rubber in the Wala † district, with the result that for three weeks there was warfare along the river fronts for thirty miles."

Evidence of a well-defined native system of land tenure from yet another part of the Congo is afforded

* A.B.I.R. official.

† The Wala district being at that time "taxed" in rubber by the official of another of the Company's stations.

by the Rev. A. E. Scrivener, from his personal experiences in the Lukolela district. In connection with this particular part of the Congo, attention may be drawn to a passage of great significance in the evidence of the Rev. John Whitehead,* of the same mission, before the Commission of Inquiry, as bearing upon the use still made of Stanley's Treaties with the native chiefs by the present-day rulers of the Congo :—

"Towards the close of the inquiry," writes Mr. Whitehead, "I asked permission to interrogate a witness, in order to elicit some information which I thought would interest the Commission. My object was to show the Commission how the land was divided up among the natives, and I did not wish to do so by discovering the meaning of my question to the witness. But when I got from the man the extent of the land he inherited from his forebears, and when I pointed out to the Commission that the State had taken a large part of the land and made a tobacco plantation, then—without acknowledging the man's ownership at all—they brushed my fact aside with the remark that the matter would have been dealt with in Stanley's arrangements with the natives. I said the natives did not understand by anything Stanley did or said that they had parted with their land."

Of this district (Lukolela), the Rev. A. E. Scrivener writes :—

"When our mission was first opened at Lukolela we found that the whole country was divided up amongst the various villages. Thus the women of a certain village could only collect firewood in certain parts of the forest, and new gardens could only be made in the territory of the villages needing the gardens. There were sometimes disputes arising out of this. Any animal

* Organ of the Congo Reform Association, December 1905.

killed by the people of one village in the territory of another was claimed by the owners of the land, and even when white men shot buffaloes or antelope it was the custom to give one limb to the chief of the village concerned. On one occasion I nearly got into a scrape in this way. A hunter in my employ shot a buffalo and sent its tail to me with a request for help to bring it to the station. The animal, however, was only stunned, and revived and got away. The villagers would not believe this, but thought it a ruse on the part of my boys to retain all for themselves. The other villages backed them up in their claim, and I had a lot of trouble before the affair was properly settled. The river was likewise parcelled out and fishing rights recognised. People from Bolobo were allowed to fish in Lukolela waters only on paying a sort of license fee, or on their agreeing to sell the fish to the Lukolela folk at reduced rates."

This experienced missionary's personal knowledge also extends to the Lower Congo. He writes of the system of land tenure there obtaining, as follows :—

"On the Lower Congo in the old days certain ferries could only be worked by certain chiefs and villages, and sometimes caravans including white men would have to wait the convenience of the ferry people, their rights being recognised by everybody. Thus the ferry over the Mposo, close to Matadi, was the property of the Mpalabala * people, who for years made a good thing out of it, having to pay a certain proportion to the king at San Salvador. When I lived at Underhill, near Matadi, in 1886, we paid a monthly rental to the chiefs of the villages near by, who collected the rent not only from us, but also from the Dutch, and English, and Portuguese houses in the vicinity."

Summing up his general experiences he concludes :—

* Palaballa.

"There is not the slightest doubt but that the whole Congo was divided among the people and the territory of each well understood."

To the Rev. John H. Weeks, who has a Congo experience of a quarter of a century, I am indebted for the following conclusive details on land tenure among the Bangalas and Lower Congo tribes :—

"The land surrounding a town (among the Bangalas) belongs to the people who live in the town. Certain landmarks, such as streams, forests, etc., are agreed upon as boundaries. If the town is near the boundary its land would reach right up to the boundary of the next town, but if the town were some distance from the forest boundary, then the ground between the boundaries would be neutral land, in which the folk of both towns could hunt, cut timber, etc., as they pleased. Within the boundary the people were free to make their farms and build their homes where they liked, provided the land was not already occupied by some one else. Priority of occupation is the only title to a piece of land. *There is no such thing as unclaimed land.* It is either within the boundary and is claimed by the town living on it, or it is between the boundaries and is held for the benefit of the near towns as neutral hunting ground, and no one town can sell that neutral land without the consent of the other towns which are mutually benefited by it.

"If a slave cultivated a piece of land belonging to her master's town, she would have full rights over it, and her master would see those rights were not infringed. Of course she could not sell the ground, but she could sell the farm as a farm and the stuff growing on it, and the person who bought the stuff—cassava, sugar-canes, etc.—could continue to cultivate that piece of land if she were an inhabitant of the town owning that land; if not, she could let the produce mature there, and when she had removed the said produce the land would again revert to the town.

"When we bought a piece of land at Monsembe, in 1890, the price we gave was divided among the head men

in the town according to their importance, and they gave a part of their shares to their followers—members of their families and folk attached to their families other than slaves.

"The State, *i.e.* the Commissaire of the district, told us we could take the plot of land from the natives for nothing, but we recognised that the natives had rights in their land, and hence we paid them compensation for relinquishing those rights to us. Afterwards we took out a title from the State. If we had not compensated the natives, they would have regarded us as interlopers who had stolen their land, and I think their view would have been the right one. If the people of one town killed an animal on ground belonging to another town, a part of the animal was sent to the heads of the town owning the land upon which it was killed.

"The river running by the land belonging to a town was the joint property of the townsfolk for fishing purposes. People of other towns were not allowed to fish there. There were, however, large tracts of neutral water where all could fish as they pleased, provided no one else was fishing there. Every island in the river has its owners: either it belongs to one town when the island is immediately opposite it, or to two or three towns—riverine towns—whose mainland property is in a line with the island. The natives were very punctilious in observing land and water rights. *They never attempted to set a fish trap in the river that ran by our land* (*which we had bought of them*), *without first asking our permission.*

"The above notes refer to the Bangala tribe of the upper river, but the following notes deal with the Lower Congo, *i.e.* below Stanley Pool. The chief of the town owns the ground upon which the town is built, the neighbouring plateaux, the farm lands, the woods, and the streams that flow through his land. During the time the various families live in his town they can hunt in the forests, fish in the streams, and cultivate the farm lands belonging to the chief. He shows each woman the piece of land she may farm, but on leaving

the town to live elsewhere they have no further rights and privileges in those lands and forests, etc., and they revert to the chief.

"As the land belongs to the chief he receives, in recognition, tolls in kind. A share of palm wine is regularly given to him (he owns the palms), not for him to sell, but for him and his household to drink. When there is a good pea-nut and bean season, each woman gives him a portion—a basket of her harvest in pea nuts and beans. When the men kill an animal, a hind leg is given to the chief, or else the kidneys and the pieces of meat along the back-bone. He also receives a share of the tolls paid by travellers—white or black—for use of bridges and ferrying canoes in his district, and use of roadside market places (not the large regular markets), and also a share of all fines inflicted on those who break the laws of his district.

"In the old days there were cross-cuts in the roads indicating the boundary of every chief's land. The 'bush' belonging to a town could only be fired at the end of the dry season by arrangement with the chief to whom it belonged. If the bush of one town was a continuation of the bush of another town, then the towns owning that bush, running conjointly, mutually arranged the day of firing it, and even then representatives of each town had to be present.

"*There is no such thing as unclaimed land on the Lower Congo.* When we bought Zunduwa (Old Underhill) we paid the money, trade goods, to the chiefs of the nearest towns who claimed it, and as it was a large piece of ground, it thus covered land belonging to two or three chiefs. *Before the State existed every trader and Mission bought their land sites direct from the natives, as the archives of the State will prove.*

"On the Upper Congo, among the Bangalas there are no paramount chiefs to the towns. There are head men, *i.e.* heads of families, and when, as is usual, several families join together to build a town there you have several head men, each autocratic in his own family, and in the section of town where his family lives. It sometimes happens that a head man, by

reason of the size of his 'family,' number of his slaves, the amount of his wealth, and the possession of a dominant will, gains an ascendency over the other head men in the town, yet he is not *the chief* of the town (as a chief on the Lower Congo). Hence the land is communal, and all living in the town can cultivate the land belonging to the town without paying a fee or rent to any one.

"On the Lower Congo each chief is paramount in his own town, and owns the land around him. He is a descendant of the Old Nobility, receives homage from the people only one degree less than the king at San Salvador, and, as owner of the land, he takes the fees above mentioned from those who cultivate it and hunt over it. At the same time, the fee is small, and only to be paid in times of good harvest. Thus the land is practically communal. In some districts the tolls paid to the chief vary, and are regarded more as presents to the chief, as chief, than as tolls to the owner of the land. *The nearer you approach to San Salvador the more feudatory is the land tenure, and the further away the more communal is the tenure.*

"I trust the above notes are clear and will enable you to make a stand for the rights of these people. There is no system of manuring land, consequently every three or four years fresh land is worked while the old lies fallow for regaining its strength. Hence, it is absolutely necessary for villages to own large quantities of land. *Restriction in land means starvation.*"

Such is the overwhelming testimony as to native rights in land, which the Belgian Government cynically sweeps aside in pursuance of the policy of robbery and enslavement which was inaugurated by Leopold II., and is being perpetuated to-day by his Jacks-in-office under "his enlightened guidance." *

* M. Renkin, Belgian Colonial Minister, speaking at Boma (Congo), May 10, 1909.

CHAPTER IX

DEPRIVED OF HIS LAND THE NATIVE DIES

"A region where the natives have no idea of money, where their rudimentary needs have not made it necessary for them to trade amongst themselves or with others."—M. CARTON DE WIART, in the Belgian Chamber.

ALTHOUGH I have expressly confined myself in this section to the appropriation of the land by the present rulers of the Congo, in so far as that appropriation is made the excuse for the *real object* of Belgian action, viz., the appropriation of the produce of the land having commercial value on the world's markets, a short reference may not inappropriately be made to another aspect of the matter.

How barbarous and anti-civilising an agency is the European Administration which robs the native of tropical Africa of his proprietary rights in the land outside the sites of his towns or villages and adjacent food plantations, has been sufficiently shown.

But what has not been shown is the intimate manner in which such a system interferes in every necessary of native life.

The native of the Congo sustains himself by agriculture, fishing, and hunting. In various parts of the Congo he cultivates manioca, millet, rice, maize, bananas, sweet potatoes, sugar cane, sesame,

sorghum, ground nuts (for food), etc. How great is the labour involved in this branch of economy can be doubted only by those who imagine that the native has but to sit on the ground for the fruits of the earth to fall at his feet, or by superficial travellers who conclude that if they do not find the native working every hour in the day with the assiduity of a labouring man of Northern Europe, that he is "idle." *

By demanding his incessant labour to gather the produce of the soil of commercial value on the world's markets which they have appropriated, the European rulers of the Congo deprive the native of the means of adequately providing for his own sustenance. They do so not only in this indirect manner, but in a direct manner also, because the enforcement of their system requires the upkeep of an enormous army of soldiery and workmen, their women and their camp followers (probably not less than 100,000 souls to feed). This army must be fed, and the natives have to feed it. The terrible effects to which this double deprivation of native power to sustain native life has led on the Congo, needs no illustration here. They are sufficiently

* In February, March and April the whole population is engaged in clearing the bush for planting. . . . Forests over an enormous distance are cleared for sowing of maize and the insertion of banana cuttings."—(Dr. Vedy, on the Ababuas.) "The plantations *sont de toute beauté*"—(De Bauw, *idem.*) "The natives of the Cataracts region have immense plantations of palm trees, manioca, sweet potatoes, ground nuts."—(Laurent, Bull. Off., 1906.) "The forest was cultivated for 1 to 1½ hours' march, and the plantations often as well cared for as those of Flanders."—(*Idem*, from the Sankuru to Nyangwe.) "The abundance of food supplies testified to the hard work done by the race." (*Idem*, Kasai.) "There are great plantations of maize, manioca, castor oil, sugar cane, and ground nuts." (De Deken.) "It took five hours to cross through one Basonge centre."—(Von Wissmann), etc., etc., etc.

recorded in the official and unofficial reports made public. What applies to native agriculture for food supplies, applies to fishing and to hunting.

Native communities, after four or five years, are usually compelled to shift the site of their towns, and this for two main reasons : (1) Sanitation, unless the town is situate on the bank of a river, (2) owing to the exhaustion of the fertilising properties in the soil. The weeds, bush, etc., growing on the worked-out soil are set fire to and the land is allowed to lie fallow until the ashes from the burning, and time, have given back to the earth the recuperative forces temporarily withdrawn. This occurs, of course, all over the African tropics, and anything which tends to restrict native communities in their freedom of shifting the sites of towns and food plantations tends to the promotion of disease and lack of proper sustenance.

The land outside the food plantations is the object of daily use by the natives for all necessaries, conveniences, and pleasures of life.

Plantations of tobacco and hemp are common, especially the former. Various kinds of palm trees, the *raphia* palm especially,* the banana, the bamboo, the bombax, are all called into requisition for the manufacture of fibres for native garments, mats, fishing nets, animal traps, belts, caps, basket making, native twine.

The oil palm is a supplier of a hundred and one articles of daily use : oil for cooking, for anointing the body (mainly for purposes of health and cleanliness and protection against stings of insects), dressing the hair, lighting purposes (the internal trade in palm oil has of course always been very

* This is also used for roofing purposes.

large). It is also used medicinally; for soap; for mixing with camwood powder. Various parts of the tree are used for garments (as above stated); for caulking canoes, and so on.

The camwood tree is used for its powder, for the purpose of rubbing into the skin; for religious ceremonies, burial rites, etc. Stanley was immensely struck with the enormous quantities of this powder used in the interior trade.

Hard-woods of a number of kinds, all well known to the natives, are used for canoe making;* the handles of agricultural implements, and spears and knives, beds, stools, pillows, paddles.

The land outside the plantations also furnishes copper and iron for smelting purposes; for weapons of war and the chase. All the Congo races have been workers in iron and copper for centuries: some of their weapons (for instance, the Kasai battle axes) are models of careful workmanship and artistic sense.

The forest furnishes a number of plants, all well known to the natives and distinguished by name, for their medicinal properties.

For the manufacture of salt, plantain skins and the roots of a number of herbaceous water plants are utilised.

The product of the chase not only gives food, but the skins of slain beasts are utilised for a variety of purposes, such as belts, slings, and sheaths for knives, cases for arrows, shields, etc.

Copal and other resins are used for lighting purposes.

* There used to be a large trade in canoes. Now it is extinct, and nearly all the large canoes have disappeared with the extirpation of the trade in live-stock, for which they were largely used.

In short, free access to his land, whether cultivated or uncultivated, is, for the native, an absolute necessity of life.

Cut off from it, he dies.

And throughout the vast Congo territories he has been and is dying; dying uselessly, rapidly; dying from want, dying from misery, dying from hopelessness and despair. For the last seventeen years, while the civilised Governments of the earth have passed by on the other side, while the author of the tragedy built palaces and pagodas, raised monuments to his own glory, bought up consciences and manufactured Public Opinion, the Congo native has been dying.

And throughout the vast Congo territories, wherever rubber is still to be got in substantial quantities, the machinery of death—o'er which now waves the Belgian flag—grinds on relentlessly. In the last issued White Book Consul Thesiger paints to us in official language, but from which human indignation cannot altogether be eliminated, the process of destruction at work among the Bakuba, a section—and one of the most interesting sections—of the great Lunda people. The Bakuba have the misfortune of inhabiting the Kasai region, one of the richest in forest rubber left in the Congo. The Consul pictures to us the accursedly familiar scene. The villages "imposed" in so much rubber per week; armed soldiers stationed within them; eternal labour from year's end to year's end in the forest; lack of food; houses crumbling to ruins—"inversion of the old slave trade" in full swing. "Any shortage is punished by imprisonment, fines or *chicotte* (flogging), while the amount fixed is so high that the

natives, especially the Bakuba, have not time to cultivate their fields, repair their houses, hunt, or fish." The population has been disarmed. The villagers must supply the soldiers—whose corporals take women hostages and flog—with women, victuals, and housing. The rubber tax is "so heavy that the villagers have no time to attend even to the necessities of life, and many of the capitas (corporals) told me they had orders not to allow the natives to clear the ground for cultivation, to hunt, or to fish, as it took up time which should be spent in making rubber. Even so in some cases the natives can only comply with the demands made on them by utilising the labour of the women and children. In consequence their huts are falling into ruin, their fields are uncultivated and are being fast overgrown by bush, and the people are short of food. . . . Everywhere the people are dying off and the numbers decreasing."

That Report, published by H.M. Government in January, 1909, was penned in September (1908), and consequently discussed the state of affairs prevailing a few months before annexation was voted in the Belgian Chamber. Quite so. And, in December last, *five months after annexation*, M. Renkin, Belgium's Colonial Minister, the *ex-concessionnaire*, declared in the Belgian Chamber and Senate that the natives of the Kasai were perfectly free, free as air, and that statements to the contrary were odious calumnies.*

* My attention has been lately drawn to three remarkable studies published by M. A. J. Wauters in his organ *Le Mouvement géographique* [Brussels] on the land tenure prevalent among the Mangbetus, the Warega and other tribes of the Upper Congo. They will be found in the issue of that paper for February 28, May 23, and

The £10 shares of the Kasai Trust are now quoted in hundredths, and at the time of writing one hundredth part of an ordinary share is standing at over £4.

. . . . . .

For five years British Public Opinion has been asked to exercise patience.

And marvellous has been the patience it has exercised.

For five years it has watched—ofttimes puzzled and disquieted—its own Government trust assurances which have turned to dead sea fruit; believe or affect to believe, in promises which have been broken as quickly as they were made; ignore, or affect to ignore, the significance of acts and declarations which seemed to bear but one interpretation.

Patience is an admirable virtue, but what a queer idea the Congo native must have of the white man's God. Our patience has not meant a "close time" for him. Civilisation leaves the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air which it hunts, some respite. For seventeen shameful years civilisation has been content that the men and women of the Congo should not even enjoy that privilege.

July 11 of this year. The particulars given add to the *Belgian* testimony which confounds the policy of the Belgian Government in its treatment of the rights in land of the Congo races as *res nullius*.

PART III

THE FOREIGN OFFICE AND THE CONGO

CHAPTER X

THE FOREIGN OFFICE AND THE CONGO GOVERNMENT, 1896–1904

"He did not think any of the great European Powers, with the acts so clearly established as they now were, ought to be content, in view of their own honour in the matter, to sit still and do nothing."—Sir E. GREY, 1904.

"The Congo Free State lay absolutely at the mercy of this country or any other country which chose to say it would occupy the capital at Boma in the name of civilisation."—Lord FITZMAURICE, 1904.

I WOULD beg the reader to believe that no animus against any individual, or individuals, dictates the pages which are to follow. I would give a good deal to feel that they need not be written, and that the treatment of the Congo question by the Foreign Office in the past had been replaced by intentions commensurate with the duties of this country. When the very admirable despatch to Belgium of last November* was made public, I thought—and others thought—that this change, however late in the day, had taken place. The issue of that despatch, as we have seen,† was followed by a remarkable testimony of national approval. After years of half-hearted effort, of miscalculation, of ineffectual waving of the big stick and muttered threats, succeeded by periods of absolute inactivity; after long years of evasion, subtle reasons for

* Part I. † 1908.

inaction and ponderous indecision—the Foreign Office had at length screwed itself up to the point of issuing a request for "an immediate amelioration in the lot of the natives" of the Congo. Confronted with the continuation, unaltered, of a vile system of slavery, and with the increasing bad faith, defiance, and insolence of the King of the Belgians and his Ministers; supported on the other hand by a remarkable and sustained exhibition of popular feeling at home—it seemed clear that at last the Foreign Office had thrown aside the old clinging garments of pusillanimity and vacillation. It seemed impossible that a British Government, in view of all that had happened, in view of all that was happening, would make such a request if it were not prepared and ready, failing compliance, to back up the request by action. No one last November would have deemed it possible that, in the face of added slights, another year was to pass with nothing to its credit but more empty words, coupled with something like a confession of impotence and an attempt to evoke the spectre of war to cover the failure of diplomacy.

One is at a tremendous disadvantage under any circumstances in criticising a Government department. And the inherent disadvantages are not lessened when it so happens that one has been in close contact with that department for a number of years. It adds to the unpleasantness and, too, one has naturally become acquainted with matters; with opinions, tendencies, and views, which cannot without impropriety be touched upon. I have been in frequent public and private correspondence with the Foreign Office since 1902, and letters written and received fill half a dozen volumes

which stand on my book-shelves. From the personal point of view warm appreciation for much consideration and courtesy is the only sentiment I entertain towards the Foreign Office, if a humble individual whom circumstances have forced into an undesired publicity may venture to so express himself.

Having said that, let me add my belief, which, I think, will be made good here, that anything more irresolute, anything more inconsistent and feeble than the action of the Foreign Office in this Congo question it would be difficult to imagine. If these characteristics are persisted in, the cause of Congo reform, already compromised, is lost. The next six months will probably be decisive one way or another. And if this cause is lost, it is my absolute conviction that, whatever else may happen, one thing is certain to happen—England will suffer, and suffer cruelly. She will suffer in her self-respect. She will suffer in a loss of power and prestige all over the world. She will suffer as the outcome of a lack of moral courage on the part of her governing statesmen and a lack of grit on the part of her people, in her national interests. I believe, and many leading men in the councils of the nation believe, that, taking all the circumstances into account, few things more disastrous could befall England than failure to wrest the Equatorial region of Africa from the grip of the slave system which is destroying its peoples. That belief is the justification for these pages.

To argue, as some have done, that it is not our business, is an absurdity. We made it our business in 1884 and 1885, when we recognised the flag of King Leopold's enterprise as the symbol of

"a humane and benevolent" enterprise, sent the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs of London in state to Brussels to present a congratulatory address, and subsequently played a leading part in the deliberations of the Berlin Conference, which, but for our concurrence, would never have been held. We renewed our responsibility when, in 1903, the House of Commons indicted the administration of the Congo State in a formal resolution, and the Unionist Government despatched a circular Note to the great Powers, suggesting another Conference. We renewed it again in 1904, when the British Government circulated throughout the world a scathing indictment of this "friendly Government." We have been proclaiming ever since that the matter is our business, and that we mean to see it through.

The first complaint against the Foreign Office is that between 1896 and 1903 it received a mass of reports from the Congo and from the British dependencies and spheres of influence adjacent to the Congo, relating not only to the ill-treatment of the aboriginal population, but to the abuses of which British coloured subjects have been the victims; and that it suppressed them. In 1896, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, then Colonial Secretary, told Mr. J. A. Pease in the House of Commons that—

"complaints have been received of these British subjects having been employed without their consent as soldiers, and of their having been cruelly flogged and in some cases shot."

Some of these reports were of a shocking character, as the records of the British West African Colonial dependencies would bear witness, as well as our own Foreign and Colonial Office records.

For years King Leopold's agents—Englishmen—had been allowed to "recruit" British natives in Lagos, in the Gambia and in Sierra Leone, and, in one or two instances, in the West Indies. These men were shipped in the light of day and under contract as "labourers" from those places, in British mail steamers. When they got to Boma or Matadi, in the Lower Congo, they were told by the officials that they would have to serve in the far interior as soldiers. They were drafted into the military camps, and, in due course, participated in the carnival of massacre then going on in the Upper Congo in the process of forcing the tribes to submit to the ivory and rubber tribute. Thousands of British coloured subjects were pitchforked under false pretences into the Congo to do King Leopold's bloody work. Indeed, at one time, the bulk of his black mercenaries were Hausas and Yorubas. Many, of course, were killed in these so-called rubber "wars." Others objected to serving as soldiers, and were, as Mr. Chamberlain said, "flogged and shot." Others were flogged and shot (and worse) in the course of their illegal employment as soldiers of *Bula Matadi.**

These reports were, as I have remarked, suppressed; the sequel, no doubt, of Foreign Office manœuvring with King Leopold which had ended in the Anglo-Congolese Convention of 1894, in which our diplomacy sought to utilise the native army of the Congo State to block the French advance on the Nile.† To the above-mentioned arrangement with the sovereign of the Congo may, doubtless, be attributed also the way in which the

* The Congo Government.
† *Ibid.*

case of the British trader, Harry Stokes, was dropped by the Foreign Office. Stokes, it may be remembered, was arrested and hung without trial, and on doubtful evidence, by a Belgian officer. This Convention, which by one of its clauses gave considerable offence to Germany, and by another to France, and which, in addition, infringed the spirit of the neutrality of the Congo State stipulated by the Berlin Act, had to be ignominiously withdrawn. The incident has prejudiced ever since, in German eyes, the sincerity of our Government in its declarations about the Congo, and, to-day, many Germans undoubtedly believe that the British movement for reform is a cloak to conceal the designs of the Foreign Office both in regard to the mineral wealth of Katanga (South-East Congo) and in respect to the Trans-African railway. They point to the fact that British capital has obtained a considerable holding in these mines, that a brother of Sir Edward Grey's * has been an employee of the Tanganyika Concessions, Limited, an off-shoot of the Katanga "Committee"; that another brother, Mr. Charles Grey, is also connected with this concern, and is manager of the Rhodesian-Katanga junction railway; that it was he who, this year, was deputed to meet Prince Albert at Broken Hill; and they come to this conclusion—amongst others—that the Foreign Office, under cover of a so-called humanitarian crusade, is pursuing the usual tactics dear to the heart of perfidious Albion. The Germans do not understand that a statesman of the character of Sir Edward Grey would not allow his public action to be influenced because he happened to

* Mr. George Grey.

have two brothers interested in the Katanga copper mines. Nor do they realise, apparently, that the British interest in the Katanga mines is an interest allied with the Leopoldian interest and, judging from the comments of its promoters upon the Congo reform movement in this country, is anything but friendly disposed towards that movement. Nevertheless the unfortunate example given by the Foreign Office in 1894 does not enable us to pose altogether comfortably as injured innocents when we find the Germans entertaining these suspicions —and, perhaps with greater justice, as we shall see later, others.* And, so far as the Katanga mines are concerned, it would be well if some authoritative statement might be officially forthcoming, because the mineral future of Katanga is believed to be immense; because the Anglo-Belgian monopoly which has been there set up in part, and the Belgian monopoly which exists over the whole province not only in minerals, but in land, produce and labour, is bound sooner or later—and sooner rather than later—to fall foul of the legitimate interests of settlers, traders, and miners of British and Dutch blood from the south. With the advent of the railways which from the west and south are converging upon Katanga with great rapidity, especially from the south, this conflict, unless the Belgian Government is, meantime, compelled to act up to the stipulations of the Anglo-Congolese Convention and the Berlin Act, and throw open the Katanga to freedom of trade, freedom of settlement and establishment for white men of all nationalities, is absolutely inevitable; and we shall be accused of having engineered it all along.

* This subject is dealt with in greater detail in Chapter XVI.

To resume. By 1903 the policy of the Foreign Office towards the Congo State had changed under the pressure of public opinion influenced by the stories of horror coming from the Congo, and by the public attacks upon King Leopold's system of administration. Feeling in Parliament was very strong, and after the fierce debate in May of that year, Lord Lansdowne memorialised the Powers. The British Note revealed the existence of official reports, as to the ill-treatment of natives and British coloured subjects, admitted by Mr. Chamberlain in 1896, and, again, by Lord Cranborne * in March, 1903. So far as the aboriginal population was concerned, the Note said—

"Moreover, information which has reached H.M. Government from British officers in territory adjacent to that of the State tends to show that, notwithstanding the obligations accepted under Article II. of the Berlin Act, no attempt at any administration of the natives is made, and that officers of the Government do not apparently concern themselves with such work, but devote all their energy to the collection of revenue. . . . The Congo stations are shunned, the only natives seen being soldiers, prisoners, and men who are brought in to work. The neighbourhood of stations which are known to have been populous a few years ago is now uninhabited, and emigration on a large scale takes place to the territory of neighbouring states, the natives usually averring that they are driven away from their homes by the tyranny and exaction of the soldiers."

The Note went on to say that a Consul of "wide African experience" (Mr. Roger Casement), who had been appointed to reside permanently in the State, had not been able to travel in the interior of the country to study the conditions

* Replying to questions by Mr. Channing and Mr. Mansfield.

of the natives because "his time had been principally occupied in the investigation of complaints preferred by British subjects." In connection with these complaints, the Note referred to "examples of grave maladministration and ill-treatment," occurring in the "immediate vicinity of Boma, the seat of the Central Staff," and went on to argue that if such were the case the condition of the aboriginal natives in the far interior, with no Consul to appeal to, must be anything but enviable.

King Leopold was quick to see the disadvantage at which the Foreign Office had placed itself. He was acute enough to grasp that the British Government, having suppressed reports—the nature of which was well known to the executive staff in Brussels—over a long term of years, could not publish them without laying itself open to severe criticism for having hushed up the story of abominable outrages upon helpless British "protected" (!) negroes, and without the whole scandal of the Congo State's recruiting agencies in British dependencies coming out. So he assumed an air of injured innocence, and asked again and again for their production. Thus closely pressed, Lord Lansdowne explained that the reports were "founded upon hearsay and lacked the authority of personal observation." Moreover, he added, "some of the reports were of old date."

The tactical advantage thus gained by King Leopold at the very opening of his correspondence with the British Government was destined to become typical as the controversy developed. His representatives at foreign capitals made the most of the blunder, and they had a capital case. Here was the British Government memorialising the

Powers, and suggesting another international conference to consider the affairs of the Congo, advancing as one of its main arguments that it possessed reports of a damaging kind against the Congo Administration; going so far as to specify their nature. Challenged to produce them, it had thrown away its position by declaring that the reports were "founded on hearsay," and "lacked the authority of personal observation." What a perfidious Albion!

No incident could have done more to convince the Continent that we were foisting "*une mauvaise querelle*" upon the impeccable Sovereign of the Congo State whom, nine years previously, we had essayed to make a tool of for our own ends. It weakened in advance the effect of Consul Casement's report, subsequently communicated to the Powers. To comment upon the other aspects of the incident would be superfluous and unpleasant.

If Consul Casement's report, published in February, 1904, had been accompanied by the reports previously received, instead of by Lord Cromer's brief but valuable observations touching the Lado Enclave only, the consequences might have been temporarily inconvenient for the British Government at home, but our diplomacy would have been enormously strengthened abroad. The British White Book would then have presented a continuous story of wrong-doing, extending over many years. Consul Casement's report would not have been open to the facile charge of being a prejudiced concoction by a British official instructed to make out a case at all costs. It would have been, on the contrary, the culminating proof

afforded by a British public servant of "wide African experience"—of a state of affairs disgraceful to civilisation. But by suppressing the previous reports of its officers, and the reports of the West African Governments in the possession of the Colonial Office, the British Government exposed its Consul—the man—to the concentrated fire of all the enemy's batteries. Consul Casement was attacked with great malignancy and virulence. It was poor tactics on the part of the Foreign Office, to say the least.

But what to this day remains incomprehensible is that the Foreign Office should ever have published the Casement report at all, characterised it as a "grave indictment," and communicated it to the Powers, if the Foreign Office did not intend to follow up its action by something more effective than the miserable vacillation of the ensuing five years. The issue of that report pledged this country to the reform of the Congo. Yet beyond transmitting the document to our Ambassadors and Ministers abroad, the diplomatic machinery of this country was not set in motion to press the matter forward. Neither the British Note of the preceding year, nor the report itself, produced any effect upon the Powers, and, but for the agitation in England, the Foreign Office would have accepted the rebuff and quietly dropped the question. It was at very little pains to conceal its regret that the subject should ever have been raised.

Thus, at the very outset, the official intervention of Britain in the affairs of Congo was vitiated, first by the false position in which the British Government had placed itself in the matter of the reports antecedent to the Casement report, and,

secondly, by the impression produced abroad that it was not in earnest, and had merely yielded to home pressure.*

The next step taken by the Foreign Office was in accord with its *début*. It had circulated throughout the world, be it remembered, a lengthy document containing the most comprehensive and terrific onslaught upon a "friendly Government." Yet the Foreign Office saw fit to hand over that report as it had been received—*i.e.* containing the names, dates, and places, suppressed in the published copy—to a Commission appointed by the Government it had accused, without arranging for a British representative to attend the sittings of that Commission. Two courses were open to the Foreign Office in connection with the Commission constituted by King Leopold after the publication of the Casement report; either to have dissociated itself entirely from it, on the ground that the accused party was not the proper person to hold the monopoly of inquiry into his own deeds, and to have insisted upon a joint Anglo-Belgian Commission; or to have compelled the Congo Government, if it saw fit to recognise a Commission appointed by that Government, to agree to the attendance of a British representative, with an adequate staff of shorthand writers. Remember

* "Four times the Congo State had taunted the Government with making statements which they were not ready to back up by proof, and in that matter the Government had certainly placed themselves in a false position. The defenders of the Congo State were trying to make Europe believe that these reports did not exist, and that, having made statements which they had not the material to back up, the Government had sent out a Consul into the country, to make a report justifying those statements. That, of course, was absolutely false, but its falsity would be best proved by the publications of the reports to which the Government had referred."—Mr. Alfred Emmott (Right Hon. Alfred Emmott) in the House of Commons, June 9, 1904.

that the report itself, and even the personality of the author of it, had been attacked with the greatest bitterness. To say that the Foreign Office could not have "insisted," and could not have "compelled," would be irrelevant. If it were not in that position, it should never have published the report.

The Foreign Office took neither course. It was content to *suggest* that a British representative should attend the Commission. The suggestion met with a flat refusal. King Leopold has never listened to suggestions, and never will. "No precedent"—declared his mouthpiece, the Chevalier de Cuvelier—"could be discovered which could justify the official presence of a person deputed by a foreign Government to attend a Commission of this character." * The reply to that contention obviously lay in the retort that neither was a precedent discoverable for a British Consul reporting to his Government the iniquities of a foreign Government to which he was accredited, and of his own Government hastening to issue his report to the world; and for the very good reason that the "Congo Free State" was a "State" bound by its charter to international supervision.

The Foreign Office accepted the refusal—although, mark you, the Casement report was "to form an essential basis" to the inquiries of the Commission! † The refusal was communicated on *September* 7. On *November* 2, the Foreign Office cabled to Mr. Nightingale, its new Consul in the Congo, requesting him to communicate with the

* Sir C. Phipps to the Marquess of Lansdowne, September 6, 1904.

† Sir C. Phipps to the Marquess of Lansdowne, October 4, 1904.

Commission (which had left Antwerp for the Congo on September 15), and to endeavour to obtain from that body what the Congo Government had declined to grant, viz. permission for a British representative to attend the sittings. On December 11, Consul Nightingale cabled that the Commission agreed, and, four days after the Consul's cable announcing the portentous fact had been received, Lord Lansdowne cabled, in reply, that he was sending a representative out. Thus exactly three months after the Commission had left Antwerp for the seat of its labours, the Foreign Office prepared to despatch a representative to join it!

Apart from the impolicy in dealing with a man of the stamp of King Leopold II., of communicating to a Commission nominated by the Congo Government the full text of a British report which that Commission was to make "an essential basis" of its inquiry, without insisting upon the presence of a British representative at the sittings; apart from the lack of dignity in first of all meekly submitting to the point-blank refusal of the Congo Government to let a British Commissioner watch the proceedings, and then, six weeks later, going, hat in hand, to the Commission with an identical request; apart from this, could anything have been more inept than the whole attitude of the Foreign Office? What was the position by the time Consul Nightingale had communicated the gracious consent of the Commissioners to his official superiors in Downing Street? The Commission had been away three months. It was high up the river. It had already held its inquiry at most of the places covered by Consul Casement's itinerary before it received Consul Nightingale's message, and, when

its reply reached that gentleman, the Commission had already been investigating for several days in the immediate neighbourhood of the furthermost point reached by Consul Casement. *In other words, the work of the Commission was, to all intents and purposes, over at the very moment when the Foreign Office was arranging to send out a representative!* In the ultimate result this representative—Vice-Consul Mackie—caught up the Commission as it was returning down river, and attended its three last sittings below the "rubber zone."

The upshot of this extraordinary blundering was far-reaching. It led to the total suppression by the Congo Government of the evidence taken by the Commission, a result predicted by the Congo Reform Association at the time. The Foreign Office, as we shall see, endeavoured to obtain the evidence later on, but its efforts were fruitless, and another rebuff was added to those which had gone before. And although there was a clear breach of faith—the Congo Government having declared before the Commission sailed that they "did not entertain the slightest doubt that every publicity would eventually be given to all the proceedings which might take place," * and that the "fullest details would be supplied" † of those proceedings—Sir Edward Grey swallowed the snub, as Lord Lansdowne had swallowed the refusal to permit a British Commissioner to attend the sittings.

The suppression of the evidence had very ill-effects. It enabled the Congo Government to issue a report signed by the Commissioners which sought,

* Sir C. Phipps to the Marquess of Lansdowne, August 12, 1904.
† Sir C. Phipps to the Marquess of Lansdowne, August 19, 1904.

not unsuccessfully, to attenuate the admissions as to atrocity and general misrule they had no option but to admit. It enabled the publication of a very subtly composed document which, while vindicating the substantial accuracy of the charges formulated by Consul Casement, the missionaries, and others, contained numerous self-contradictory and white-washing paragraphs sandwiched in here and there, thus lessening the gravamen of the indictment. It enabled, for example, the doctrine of so-called "forced labour" to be upheld—

> "It is, therefore, only by making of work an obligation that the native will be made to furnish regular labour. . . . The native only understands, only respects force: he confounds it with justice. The State must be able to ensure the triumph of Law, and, consequently, force the native to work." *

Had the British Government been in a position to publish to the world the almost inconceivably horrible evidence taken by the Commissioners, these and similar apologetics with which the report was strewn and which appreciably weakened the impression it conveyed both here and abroad, would have appeared so monstrous that they, and very possibly the Congo Administration also, would have been swept away in a universal cry of execration. Notably did the suppression of the minutes allow of the issue of a report which denied one of the foulest of the charges levelled against the officials of the Congo Government, by Consul Casement and others, the charge of having tolerated, nay more encouraged, nay more of having introduced the system of mutilation as a tally for the cartridges

* Report of the Commission.

used by the soldiers in the rubber and ivory battues.* This denial would have been utterly impossible in the face of the suppressed testimony of witnesses, and in the face of the documentary evidence acquired by the Commission: such for instance as the detailed testimony extending over twelve years of Joseph Clarke, the well-known American missionary of Lake Mantumba, afterwards published by the Congo Reform Association.

As we have seen, the first debate on the Congo question in the House of Commons took place in May, 1903. The British Note to the Powers was despatched in August. Lord Lansdowne published Consul Casement's report in *February*, 1904. King Leopold's Commission of Inquiry did not set out until *September*. The feeling of the country as reflected in Parliament and, generally speaking, in the country was that, to prove efficacious and to ensure reform, the British Government's assault upon King Leopold ought to have been followed, between the publication of the attack and the departure of the Commission, by some signal act such as the establishment of British Consular jurisdiction, secured under the Anglo-Congolese Convention of 1884; which would have shown the Powers that we meant business and intended to secure guarantees for future good conduct. The feeling would have been much more pronounced if Parliament and country had been then aware of the bungle over the Commission. Such action seemed the more necessary from the manner in which our representations had been received. The Congo Government had accused us of interested

* A mass of evidence on this subject will be found in *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* (Heinemann).

motives. It had insulted our Consul * and had queried the right of British consular representatives to investigate the internal condition of a territory subject to definite Treaty obligations. Moreover, it had met our contention as to the natives being entitled to trade freely with the outer world in the produce of the soil—the key to the entire problem—with absolute defiance. Another argument favouring such a course lay in the circumstance, owing in part, no doubt, to the incidents here narrated, that none of the Powers had responded to our appeal. It was a case where diplomacy, if it meant to be effective, was bound to have shown that it was strong, and that behind words lay the capacity to act. But the Foreign Office, instead of stiffening under King Leopold's truculence and the silence of the Powers, appeared not to have the courage of its convictions, drew in its claws, and did nothing.

It is instructive to look back at the second Congo debate in the Commons which took place during this interval †—an interval witnessing a flood of shocking unofficial reports from the Congo —and to recall the language then used by those who were destined shortly afterwards to assume the reins of office: Sir Edward Grey, the future Foreign Secretary, and Lord Fitzmaurice, the future Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and spokesman of the Foreign Office in the House of

* For example, "That Mr. Casement should formulate so serious a charge .... would justify those who consider that his previous employment has not altogether been such as to qualify him for the duties of a Consul." Mr. Casement needs no defence. It suffices to say that not one of the rascally crew who have exploited the Congo for the last twenty years is fit to black Mr. Casement's boots.

† June 9, 1904.

Lords. Lord Fitzmaurice, an expert on the Congo question,* spoke of the "insolent and insulting tone" of the Congo Government's despatches: "an insult both in the substance and in tone." The Congo State, he said, was "as much the creation of European law as any corporation in this country which might be created under an Act of Parliament was the artificial creation of English law." It was open to any Power which signed the Berlin Act to declare "its intention not to be any longer bound by conditions which were not fulfilled." "Any State that chose" could bring the existence of the Congo State to an end "by sending a few ships to the mouth of the Congo"; a statement which, repeated in milder language five years later†—during which interval the "insolent and insulting tone" of King Leopold and his Ministers has attained lengths undreamt of in 1904—by Mr. E. N. Bennett, member for Woodstock, drew from Sir Edward Grey a rebuke administered in terms of lofty superiority and outraged decorum.

"What we had to do"—Lord Fitzmaurice went on—"was, in the first place to take advantage of everything that was in the Berlin Act to exert to the utmost the right of this country against the Congo Free State, and also to assert, where we could, the international rights of Europe against the Congo Free State. His first suggestion was that we should insist upon the establishment of consular courts."

Lord Fitzmaurice counselled, as the next step, an effort to revive the International River Commission provided for in the Berlin Act, with the view to the establishment of a supervisory board

* Under-Secretary in the Granville Cabinet.
† May 27, 1909.

of control resembling the machinery created for like purposes in regard to the Danube.

Sir Edward Grey declared that the story of the Congo was "an intolerable one to hear about in relation to contemporary history." He did not think that "any of the great European Powers, with the facts so clearly established as they now were, ought to be content, in view of their own honour in the matter, to sit still and do nothing." The Congo State was not "an independent Power," but the "mandatory and trustee of other Powers." He looked to the Government "to take further steps which were possible."

"We must run the risk of exciting jealousy and suspicion; indeed, he expected we had excited some already by the steps that had been taken. But a matter of that kind cut both ways; it was true it made it difficult to take separate steps, but, on the other hand, whatever step we had to take was likely to lead the other Powers to take steps also. . . . He thought we might put the establishment of Consuls ('with consular jurisdiction') on the ground that, if other Powers would not co-operate with us in this matter, in what we considered the general interests of humanity, which were as much theirs as ours, we must, at any rate, see to the protection of our own subjects. . . . It was true that the susceptibilities of other Powers might be aroused. Then by all means let them appoint Consuls of their own. He would point out to the noble Lord that his hon. friend the member for Oldham, in pressing this step on the Government put it exceeding moderately and suggested that it should not be taken without first entering into communication with other European Powers. By all means let that be done, and if other Powers did not like us taking such steps, let them suggest other steps."

Here, in these two speeches, made by the future occupants of the Foreign Office—both of

whom had been at the Foreign Office before—*was a policy.*

But the Foreign Office, represented at that time by Lord Lansdowne and Earl Percy, had no policy beyond "earnestly hoping" that the Congo Government would "address itself to the inquiry which it has publicly and solemnly announced," in the proper spirit—a pious hope which we find to-day, five years later, Sir Edward Grey repeating as regards the Belgian Government. The rubber slavers of the Congo have grown fat, and the natives have grown fewer and fewer in numbers, on the pious hopes of the British Foreign Office.

Fate was to place Sir Edward Grey and Lord Fitzmaurice in the position of having repeated opportunities of applying the policy they had declared to be practicable; and of failing to take them. And it was to fall to the lot of Lord Lansdowne to urge that policy upon them, which he himself had failed to adopt when he had the chance.

One last comment before closing the review of this opening period in the official struggle with King Leopold over the Congo. Sir Edward Grey and Lord Fitzmaurice declared themselves in 1904 in favour of definite action. No one can doubt that if the Foreign Office had then shared their view that it was incompatible with anybody's honour "to sit still and do nothing," the back of King Leopold's resistance would have been quickly broken and tens of thousands of natives—perhaps hundreds of thousands—done to death in one form or another would be alive to-day. At that time the only indication of public support in favour of a strong policy to which Lord Lansdowne could

point, was the feeling in the House which [largely due to the steadfastness of Sir Charles Dilke, who was the first to raise the Congo question in that Assembly, ably supported in later years by Sir Gilbert Parker, Sir George White, Mr. J. Ramsay Macdonald, Mr. E. N. Bennett, and some others] has always been unanimous; the attitude of the Press which on the whole has not greatly varied, and the newly formed Congo Reform Association * which had succeeded, it is true, in enlisting many important persons round its banner—including four Cabinet Ministers and three Under-Secretaries in the Liberal Cabinet that was to be!—but which had not then got the holding in the country it has since acquired.

These statesmen, then, were willing to take separate action, and willing to run the risk of exciting the jealousy of other Powers, when the popular movement for reform as an organised force —which Sir Edward Grey was subsequently (1908) to describe as unparalleled for thirty years—had only begun.

* April, 1904.

CHAPTER XI

THE FOREIGN OFFICE AND THE CONGO GOVERNMENT, 1905–JUNE, 1906

"If any criticism is possible on the action of the late or present Government in regard to the Congo, it is that they have been overpatient."—Earl PERCY, July, 1906.

THE next act opens with the return of King Leopold's Commission from the Congo. It landed at Antwerp in March, 1905, having spent exactly three months in the upper river and six weeks skirting the fringe of the rubber district, which is larger than the German Empire and Austro-Hungary. For seven months its report was suppressed * and the events which the interval was to produce both in Belgium and on the Congo convinced every one except the Foreign Office that the Congo Government, encouraged by the initial errors of our diplomacy and its obvious half-heartedness, not only had no intention of altering its ways, but was determined to flout us. The demand for the establishment of British Consular jurisdiction, especially for the moral effect it would produce in Europe—as Sir Edward Grey had argued in 1904—was urged once more both in Parliament † and outside it. Had the delay in

* Communicated to the Foreign Office, November 7, 1905.
† August 4, 1905.

making public the Commission's report been accompanied by an improved condition of affairs in the Congo, it might have been looked upon in a different light. As the situation on the Congo was getting worse instead of better, the delay was patently aimed at gaining time.

The news from the Congo was of the worst kind. The back of the Commissioners—two of whom, to do them justice, were deeply affected by what they saw and heard; the third was an old hand—had hardly been turned, when the rubber saraband, the dance of death, broke out with renewed vigour. The accounts sent home by missionaries who had made good their charges before the Commission, especially from the ABIR concession district and the Crown domain, were heartrending. The Director of the ABIR had been allowed to return to Europe unmolested. The treatment of native witnesses dragged from their distant homes and sent down river a thousand miles to testify against Belgians whose conduct the Commission had denounced to the "Judicial authorities" at Boma, formed the subject of numerous communications to the Foreign Office. Lodged in unsanitary conditions, delayed for months, deprived of even the necessaries of life, they died like flies. Lord Lansdowne's pity was aroused, and he instructed the British Consul to take measures to afford these unfortunate victims of a judicial inquiry, provoked by a British consular report, such relief as it lay in his power to give; another incident for which the Congo Government would have been hard put to find a "precedent." This act will always stand to the credit of Lord Lansdowne's humanity. Prominent native witnesses

before the Commission, whom the Congo Government had pledged itself to the Foreign Office should be protected from molestation, were imprisoned and persecuted. The Rev. J. H. Harris of Baringa (ABIR concession), to whom the Commissioners had expressed their indebtedness in writing, sent letter after letter to the Commission protesting against these outrages, and, at a later date, reports from Mr. Harris and Mr. Scrivener continually reaching me, I communicated personally with M. Schumacher, the Swiss member of the Commission; but without effect, beyond a courteous answer.

All this time, the Foreign Office would do nothing but "suggest" and "represent." In the Parliamentary debate of August, Lord Percy admitted that the reports received, "all said that the state of affairs was not better—possibly it was worse than before the Commission arrived."

"There were," he added, "outrages against the natives which had produced a serious state of exasperation, and the lives of the missionaries themselves were in danger, while in several cases there had been attempts to intimidate or to punish those who gave evidence before the Commission."

But such trivialities could not ruffle the serenity of the Foreign Office. It continued "earnestly to hope" that matters would right themselves in time.

But the greatest scandal of all, that which pointed with more conclusiveness than anything else to the veritable intentions of the Congo Government, was the re-appointment of General Baron Wahis to the Governor-Generalship of the

Congo.* In May (1905) the ship carrying Baron Wahis back to the scene of his exploits, passed in mid-ocean the steamer conveying the remains of one of the Baron's pupils, Governor Costermans, then in supreme charge on the Congo, who had committed suicide after interviewing the Commissioners upon their return from up-river. Baron Wahis was the incarnation on the spot of King Leopold's policy of pillage and slavery. He was first appointed Governor-General by the King in 1891, and had held the appointment ever since, with occasional furloughs. His original nomination to the post had coincided with the inauguration of the Leopoldian System, fully described in Part II. of this book, the root-cause of the abominations which have polluted the Congo basin and brought immense pecuniary profits to its beneficiaries. The famous edicts establishing bonuses on the amount of rubber and ivory obtained by the officials from their various districts, and fixing the scale of remuneration, were either signed by, or in the name of, the genial Baron. He, it was, who first authorised what has since been termed the "hostage system" for defaulting rubber "tax-payers." Baron Wahis' return was a direct challenge thrust in the face of the British Government. But the Foreign Office was inured by this time in the art of turning the other cheek to be buffeted.

Thus ended the year 1905. British diplomacy, with the best of causes, had been worsted all along the line by King Leopold and his creatures, and everywhere abroad the conviction gained ground

* The matter was drawn attention to in the August debate by Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. Emmott. It was ignored in Lord Percy's reply.

that the Foreign Office did not mean business. Sufficient provocation had been given to warrant half a dozen ultimatums, and one can imagine the sort of handling the Sovereign of the Congo State would have received from "Pam."

The turn came for the statesmen who recommended a vigorous policy in the interests of the national dignity, and in the cause of the natives to which their predecessors had committed the country, to see what they could do.

The new Cabinet was to include members who had publicly identified themselves with Congo reform. The British Minister at Brussels, whose personal sympathy with the Congo Administration in that city had been shown so markedly in his despatches as to provoke on one occasion unfavourable comment in the House of Commons, had been replaced by a personality said to be one of the ablest in the British diplomatic service. Would this combination of circumstances infuse some backbone into the Foreign Office?

Sir Edward Grey's early despatches were characterised by a refreshing directness of expression, and, for a moment, it might have been thought that King Leopold had run up against a rock which would shatter him and his buccaneering enterprise. But the impression did not long survive. Under its new management the Foreign Office was immediately confronted with the breach of faith over the suppression of the Commission's evidence arising out of the events dealt with in the previous chapter, and with a further provocative move in the categorical assertion on the part of the Congo Government denying the right of any Power or group of Powers to interfere in the internal affairs of the

Congo, even if the Congo Government should re-establish slavery.*

In January (1906) we find Sir Edward Grey protesting against the suppression of the Commission's evidence, and the Congo Government replying that his arguments "in no respect influence the sovereign right of decision in such matters which is claimed by every independent state." † On March 27 Sir Edward Grey returns to the charge, disclosing in his despatch that the Commissioners had refused to place at the disposal of Lord Lansdowne's envoy, the minutes taken at the sittings held before his arrival upon the scene—that is to say, as we have already noted, virtually all the sittings.‡ Again, the Congo Government objects, and once more, on April 7, does Sir Edward Grey press the matter. Finally the Foreign Secretary is met with a point-blank refusal, the last excuse for the breach of faith being the truly extraordinary

* "M. de Cuvelier argued that no foreign Power had any right to interfere with the internal administration of the Congo Free State. He denied even that a right of this nature was vested in the Signatories of the Berlin Act collectively . . . I asked M. de Cuvelier whether he meant me to understand that, in his opinion, the 6th Article of the Berlin Act, or other engagements by which the Congo Government was bound to watch over the welfare of the natives and improve their moral and material condition was meaningless, and that the other Signatories of the Act had no right to make representations if the Independent State ignored or repudiated it. If, for instance, to take an extreme case, the Congo Government were to re-establish slavery or the slave trade, the suppression of which was one of the main ends of the Berlin Act, did he hold that the other parties to that Act would be precluded, either separately or collectively, from objecting, on the ground that by so doing they would be interfering between an independent Sovereign and his subjects? . . . He thereupon said, although not very decisively, that even on the absurd assumption that the Free State were to establish slavery, the other parties to the Berlin Act could not legally interfere. . . ."—Sir A. Hardinge to Sir E. Grey, May 11, 1906.

† Sir C. Phipps to Sir E. Grey, January 11, 1906.

‡ Sir E. Grey to Sir A. Hardinge, March 27, 1906.

one that, "Mr. Morel had, perhaps, suggested this course (the publication of the evidence) in the hope that he might discover in the *procès verbaux* (minutes) fresh elements of propaganda against the officials of the Independent State)." *

"Allow me," continues M. de Cuvelier, "to remind you that the step taken by Sir Constantine Phipps on the 11th January last followed close upon the letter Mr. Morel addressed to the Foreign Office, 'to suggest that pressure should be brought to bear upon the Congo Government to give full publicity to the evidence laid before its own Commission,' and I cannot but believe that this suggestion, coming from Mr. Morel, whose *rôle* is known to you, was aimed at the Congo State." †

Sir Edward Grey thereupon gave the matter up.

"For the present at any rate, it appears useless further to press for the publication of the evidence received by the Commission."

This was not, perhaps, the best way of impressing the Congo Government with the capacity of the Foreign Office to resent such treatment. The Foreign Office had it in its power, in the face of this rebuff, to have published a considerable portion of the evidence, which it had received from its Consul in the Congo through the missionaries who had testified before the Commission, and from other sources. The publication of this portion of the evidence would have been a telling point against the Congo administration and would have added great weight to the significance of the Commission's report.‡ The veil of secrecy which it had been

* Sir A. Hardinge to Sir E. Grey, April 6, 1906.

† M. de Cuvelier to Sir A. Hardinge, April 19, 1906.

‡ "While, therefore, every confidence may be felt in their (the Commissioners') ability and fairness in describing the abuses which

attempted to throw over the nature of the horrors revealed to the Commission would thus have been authoritatively dispelled, and the Congo Government would have figured in an unenviable light. But the Foreign Office held its hand.

Simultaneously with the attempt to obtain the evidence taken by the Commission, Sir Edward Grey was concerned in an effort to secure the publication of the scheme of reforms, foreshadowed by the Commission and promised by the Congo Government as the outcome of its selection of a Committee whose appointment was made to synchronise, by decree, with the publication of the Commission of Inquiry's report. The Foreign Secretary, strongly pressed by public opinion at home, urged repeatedly for the presentation of this Committee's findings. No fault can be found with his language in this regard. Yet he was content to

came under their notice, their views as to the essential causes of those abuses, and the recommendation which they made for a reform of the present system of administration, could not have that authority which previous experience of colonial administration could alone confer upon them. The value of a large part of the report of the Commissioners must, therefore, remain undetermined, as long as the grounds upon which they formed their conclusions are inaccessible to those experts in all parts of the world who are competent to appreciate them" (Sir E. Grey to Sir A. Hardinge, March 27, 1906).

"It is true that the evidence before that Commission has not been published, but the fact that it has not been published does not diminish (on the contrary it deepens) the sombre impression which has been produced by the publication of the Report" (Sir E. Grey to the National Deputation, November, 1906).

The Congo Reform Association, subsequently published, in pamphlet form, both in English and in French, the greater part, if not the whole, of the testimony of the missionaries and of many native witnesses called by the missionaries. But this publication, of course, lacked the authority with which publication by the British Government would have invested it. The French pamphlet was sent to every member of the Belgian House and to every newspaper in Belgium. It was of course rigorously tabooed.

go on making verbal representations for four months.

At this stage, let us glance back at the position. More than a year had elapsed since the return of the Commission : a year, be it noted, during which the orgie of brutality and massacre on the Congo had gone on uninterruptedly, according to the Foreign Office's own admissions. There had been the breach of faith in the matter of the evidence ; the withholding of the Commission's report for seven months ; not the least sign of regret for the scurrilous attack upon the Casement report, the accuracy of whose charges could no longer be denied ; a further breach of faith in the maltreatment of native witnesses before the Commission, after the Commission had sailed for Europe ; the bullying of British missionaries ; the imprisonment and even murder of natives who supplied the missionaries with food ; threats against the persons of the missionaries and interference with their freedom of movement—all these things admitted by the Foreign Office. There had been the repudiation of the Congo Government of our right to interfere in the internal affairs of the Congo at all under any circumstances. There had been, and it was growing and extending in amazing ramifications, an organised campaign of calumny throughout Europe and the United States in special publications, printed in several languages and distributed everywhere by the ton, even to the seats of the Waggons-lits (in which company the King of the Belgians was an influential shareholder), against British Statesmen, institutions and colonial rule : a campaign directed by the Press Bureau run from the offices of the Congo Administration in Brussels

under the direction of a Belgian magistrate, with Belgian diplomatists and Consuls abroad as its active agents. There had been the re-appointment of Baron Wahis.

Surely if our diplomacy had been sincere something would have been done: some step taken in view of this persistent provocation?

But there was another reason, the most emphatic of any, to justify, indeed to demand, action in lieu of words, if British diplomacy was ever to emerge successful from the struggle. This reason was to be found in the composition of the Committee of Reform. It is one of the most astounding features in this astounding story that the British Government should have consented to recognise the *bona fides* of this Committee for a single moment, and that, instead of pressing month after month for its report, the British Government should not have at once and indignantly protested against its character.

At the risk of wearying my readers by reiterating fundamental facts, I would ask them to bear in mind that the British official case against the Congo, as well, of course, as the British unofficial case, rested, from the first, primarily upon the SYSTEM OF ADMINISTRATION there pursued, the system described in Part II. of this book. In his circular note to the Powers, Lord Lansdowne had said—

"As regards the ill-treatment of natives, a distinction may be drawn between isolated acts of cruelty committed by individuals whether in the service of the State or not, and *the system of administration, involving* and accompanied by systematic cruelty or oppression. . . . It is, however, with regard to the *system of administration* that the most serious allegations are brought against the Independent State."

Consul Casement's report had been from first to last an indictment of the system. He had shown the existence of an administrative machine of criminal oppression, founded upon a monstrous revival of mediæval conceptions, whose representatives on the spot were infallibly compelled, by its very nature, to exercise cruelty and violence, and whose responsible authors were the directors of the machine both in Brussels and at Boma—not their subordinates.

"A system," Sir Edward Grey, two years and a half after the Casement report, had written, "which compels the personal service of the citizen for such a purpose (*i.e.* to furnish a labour tax whose proceeds were not utilised for the benefit of the tax-payers, but 'for the advancement of commercial operations, in which the native has no interest, and from which he can receive no benefit'). . . . must always, in the opinion of H.M. Government, remain open to the imputation of constituting a form of servitude, differing in essence but little from actual slavery."

The System, then, it was which stood condemned, and it was, for the most part, *the very pillars of the System who had been selected by King Leopold to elaborate reforms!* The guilty were appointed to sit in judgment upon themselves! As M. Vanvervelde scathingly remarked in the Belgian Chamber, it was as though a committee of slave-owners had been appointed to inquire into the operations of the slave-trade. The Committee numbered fourteen, including the President, a jurist who had openly identified himself in a juridical treatise with the legal defence of the System. It contained the three highest officials of the executive staff of the Congo Administration in Brussels,

directly responsible, under the King, for the direction of the System from head-quarters. It included four officials and ex-officials of the executive staff on the Congo. It included another jurist, the most prominent defender of the System from the legal standpoint. It included the President of the Kasai trust, severely handled in the Commission of Inquiry's report, and one of the Administrators of the ABIR rubber trust, whose concession had run, literally, rivers of blood. The President of the Commission of Inquiry, and a Senator (afterwards Minister for Foreign Affairs in the present Cabinet, which is maintaining the System), were the only two members of the Committee of Reform who were not compromised either by their past actions in publicly defending the legality of the System or by their past actions in directing and applying it or benefiting from it.

The selection of such a committee to draw up a list of "reforms," coupled with the despatch of Baron Wahis to apply them, was not only an affront to Great Britain, it outraged the very elements of international decency.

But the Foreign Office did not even lodge a protest.

Can we affect surprise if in the face of so placid an acquiescence in insult upon insult, rebuff after rebuff, displayed by the Foreign Office, King Leopold should have treated it with a savage contempt he took no pains to disguise? "You ask for kicks," he would seem to have said to himself; "well, you shall get them and plenty of them, and each kick will bark your shins more badly." The crowning kick, in a double sense, was soon to come.

In June, 1906, there was issued from the offices of the Congo Government in Brussels, not the report of the famous "Committee of Reform," but a number of new decrees, signed by the triumvirate of executive officials; interspersed with argument, exhortation, and abuse of the reformers in England, and flavoured by the usual disgusting hypocrisy with which King Leopold has ever sought to conceal his piratical designs in Central Africa, from the moment when he gave utterance to those sublime sentiments which touched so deeply the Common Council of the City of London.*

The King accompanied the publication with a manifesto launched straight at the throat of the Foreign Office, in which he out-Heroded his previous performances. The manifesto remains, without a doubt, the most astonishing *pièce* that the Congo controversy has yielded up to the present. Of course we never know what may be in store for us later on. A summons from the Belgian Cabinet to mind our manners and not to talk in an offensive way about "slavery"; to arrest the leaders of the reform movement, and instantly to withdraw our Consuls and missionaries from the Congo, may well be reserved for the future. What an opportunity that will be for the Foreign Office to hunt up "precedents"!

The King began by tearing up the Berlin Act and stamping vigorously on the *débris*—

"The Congo . . . could only be, and has been, a personal enterprise. Now there is no more legitimate or respectable right than the right of the author to his

* See Preface.

own work, fruits of his labour.* The Powers surrounded the birth of the new state with their good-will; but none of them were called upon to participate in Our efforts; none possess any right of interference which nothing could justify. . . . My rights on the Congo are indivisible. They are the product of My toil and My expenses. . . . The interference which seeks to diminish his (the sovereign's) rights partakes of the character of a veritable usurpation, to use no harsher term. . . ."

Having thus summarily disposed of international obligations, the Sovereign of the Congo State proceeded, in his own inimitable fashion, to write the native history of the Congo—

"It is a fact which history has already registered that the creation of the Congo State has been pacific, legitimate, realised with the assent of the natives and without any co-operation from foreign States. At that period, separated from us by twenty years, the natives did not interest themselves in the prosperous development of the country; they ceaselessly made war upon one another, to kill each other, and remaining ignorant of the riches of the country; they only utilised the soil to provide for their own sustenance." †

King Leopold went on to say that he had been happy to find

"in the reports of the eminent Governor-General in the Congo, Lieutenant-General Baron Wahis, the assurance of the good conditions of the State and the progress daily accomplished."

A contemplation of his own virtues so overwhelmed the philanthropic monarch that, after announcing his intention to devote a sum of

* Unless, of course, he happens to be a native of the Congo valley.

† This passage may be compared with the facts produced by Stanley and others, and summarised in Part II.

£12,000 to the study of sleeping sickness, and expressing his hopes that this disease might thereby be checked, he exclaimed—

"If God gives me that satisfaction I shall be able to present myself before His tribunal with the credit of having performed one of the finest acts of the century, and a legion of rescued beings will call down upon me His grace."

What a pity Mark Twain did not wait for that, before writing his *King Leopold's Soliloquy!*

There should have been but one reply to such an open defiance—the immediate establishment of British consular jurisdiction, together with a public announcement that Great Britain would henceforth feel free to take such action as suited her then or at any other future date against the Congo State, deeming herself no longer bound by an international instrument whose provisions the Congo Government had repudiated. This to be followed by the despatch of a man-of-war to the mouth of the Congo, by way of a "demonstration"; and by a declaration of outlawry.

If the case for British action was strong in 1904 when Sir Edward Grey and Lord Fitzmaurice urged it, what infinitely greater justification had it not accumulated in the two succeeding years, and how complete was the case for it upon the issue of the King's manifesto! Action of the kind indicated above could have synchronised with an energetic renewal of diplomatic effort in the United States and on the Continent of Europe. In the former country the growth of the reform movement—thanks to the American Congo Reform Association—had led to a notable new orientation in the

official attitude of the American Government, as the late Mr. John Hay had assured me at Washington in 1904 would be the case if public feeling in the States went ahead. The American Government was already disposed to approve of a Conference, and was shortly to announce the fact. Diplomatic co-operation with the British Government had already begun. In Italy public sentiment was violently incensed against the Congo Government. Dr. Baccari, a distinguished naval medical officer, who had been sent by the Italian Government to the Congo, ostensibly to inquire into the opening for a possible Italian emigration to the uplands of the eastern portions of the Congo State, in reality to investigate the serious charges brought against the Congo administration by Italian officers in its employ (charges which were flooding the Italian War Office and finding their way into the military press), had returned and formulated the gravest accusations against the Congo officials. He had denounced the outrages prevailing all over the large area he had traversed, and had charged King Leopold's officials with a deliberate attempt to make away with him by poison. Captain Baccari had thereupon been publicly insulted in the streets of Spezzia by King Leopold's representative. The turmoil aroused by these incidents had been intensified by the discovery of a widespread conspiracy financed by the Press Bureau, to tamper with journals and even with deputies at Rome. The Italian Chamber had been the scene of several passionate debates, and the Italian Government was finally compelled to forbid any more of its officers engaging themselves in the *Force publique* of the Congo.

The terrain both in the United States and Italy was therefore eminently favourable for a vigorous diplomatic initiative by the British Government. In some other countries, too, there were, at least, elements of hope. Portuguese opinion was irritated by the treatment of Senhor Amaro, a merchant in the Lower Congo who, venturing to push his enterprise into the upper region, had had his produce seized and confiscated by the Congo authorities. A certain amount of feeling still existed both in Austria and Germany (where the Press Bureau was very active) in connection with the Rabinek affair, and the German chancellor had consented to receive, through the hands of a highly placed German personage, a petition presented by the Friends of England. Moreover, the Foreign Office possessed proof that King Leopold's troops had invaded Anglo-Egyptian territory (from which they were only expelled later by Lord Cromer closing the Nile route to Belgian supplies), and that the King was doing his utmost to bring about an armed collision, having by a characteristic refinement of ingenuity previously withdrawn most of the Belgian officers in the region and replaced them by Italians, thus hoping to involve us with Italy, while engaged, in anticipation of the *fracas* he sought to promote, in endeavouring to enlist sympathy in Paris, Berlin, and Vienna.

But British diplomacy abroad remained supine and inactive. The opportunity was thrown away, as so many other opportunities had been before, and were afterwards to be. Let the reader keep this period of the controversy in mind, when he peruses the last chapter of the present volume.

At home the Government would have found

enthusiastic support in strong action. The wave of public indignation was sweeping through the country. Great meetings were being held in city after city, town after town. The national sentiment was reflected in the Houses of Parliament. Lord Lansdowne, freed from the paralytic atmosphere of the Foreign Office, gave rein to his indignation. He spoke of the "extraordinary pretensions" of the ruler of the Congo State. He denounced the Congo system in a celebrated phrase as "bondage under the most barbarous and inhuman conditions, maintained for mercenary motives of the most selfish character." (It was not only Congo reformers who indulged in strong language!) He spoke firmly in favour of consular jurisdiction. The Archbishop of Canterbury declared that the situation was "as extraordinary in its character as it is melancholy in its incidents." In the Commons, fierce denunciation came from all sides. Sir Charles Dilke agreed with Lord Lansdowne in urging consular jurisdiction, and recommended that the Navigation Commission of control should be revived. Sir Gilbert Parker stigmatised the royal manifesto as "an extraordinary challenge to Europe and to all civilised peoples"; the British Government was entitled to take separate steps, and "if it took direct action, other Powers must follow." Earl Percy shared the general exasperation, asserting that "every State" was not only justified—

> "but under the obligation, from the point of view of self-interest, to consider how far the present system carried with it a serious menace to the reputation and even to the security of the European Governments."

He animadverted upon the fact that the

Committee of Reform had contained "seven members of the very administration whose conduct had been so severely condemned."

Sir Edward Grey and Lord Fitzmaurice met these indignant expostulations with a great show of sympathy. They attached "great importance" to consular jurisdiction. It would have a "beneficial" effect. Other people had "rights" as well as King Leopold. Still, all things considered, they would wait. They could not, however "wait for ever."

And that was all.

Henceforth the Congo problem enters a fresh phase. A new factor looms on the horizon—the direct intervention of the Belgian Government. If the introduction of that new factor had found Britain exercising her treaty rights on the Congo, and showing by her actions and by her diplomatic procedure that she was quite clearly determined upon obtaining a complete change in the system of misgovernment on the Congo, and equally determined not to allow herself to be flouted any longer. If the introduction of that new factor had found British diplomacy alert and vigorous in the capitals of Christendom, using her moral force and her gathering influence (rapidly recovering from the shadow cast over it by the South African war) in the councils of the nations, for the furtherance of the Congo cause; then, indeed, would past errors have been removed, so far as the situation permitted. The Belgian Government would either have been compelled to carry out an annexation based upon the definite abandonment of a deliberate system of piracy and destruction of human life; or the whole question would have come before

a conference of the Powers, forced for "their own honour's sake" to provide for the re-establishment of normal rule on the Congo.

But this, alas! was not to be.

The Belgian Government, already committed to the hilt (as will be shown in the ensuing chapter) to support the King's policy, came upon the scene—henceforth as an active agent in the controversy—with the consciousness that for the past three years the British Government had been defeated in every round by the cynical potentate opposed to it; with the knowledge that the British Foreign Office had allowed itself to be out-manœuvred and humiliated; with the knowledge that British diplomacy had remained passive when it could have acted with effect; with the conviction that the British official world, for reasons of its own, did not mean business, and had only made a sort of show of determination under the spur of public opinion. That, in short, the Belgian cockerel had only to stand up to the British lion and flap its wings and crow, to see that, however loud his roar, he was, after all, but a futile beast, slightly scared of his own shadow, confined in a net of his own weaving, and timidly retreating to his lair upon the least sign of opposition; endowed, moreover, with an unlimited capacity for receiving blows without wincing. These views, faithfully reflected in the ministerially inspired Belgian Press throughout this period, were to dictate the attitude of the Belgian Government in the ensuing years, in the course of which, as in the course of those that had gone before, the cry of suffering humanity, doomed to "bondage under the most barbarous and inhuman conditions, for mercenary motives of the most selfish character,"

rose clamant and pitiful from the sombre depths of the equatorial forest.

I ask the reader to consider the story unfolded in these two chapters, the story of the Foreign Office handling of the Congo problem to June, 1906. I ask for a consideration of it with a mind unprejudiced by considerations of party loyalty or personal feelings towards the individual statesmen concerned. I ask for consideration of it, not in the light of the comments and opinions with which its narration is accompanied; but in the light of the facts themselves, facts embodied in the official documents referred to and publicly accessible.

And having ventured to make this request I would add to it this question. Whatever other morals may be drawn from the story, is there not one moral to which it points above all others, the moral of the futility of dealing with the Congo problem in a spirit of irresolution, and the uselessness of relying upon the pledges of those responsible, directly and indirectly, for the welfare of the Congo territory?

We shall see presently to what extent the Foreign Office profited by the moral of its abject failure to bring the *Congo* Government to book.

CHAPTER XII

THE ATTITUDE OF THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT TOWARDS THE CONGO, 1901–1906

"Belgium is a signatory party to the Berlin Act, and it is incontestable that the practices of the Congo State are contrary to Article VI., referring to the protection of the natives. Secondly, the Chambers voted a few years ago the authorisation necessary for the King to become Sovereign of the Congo Free State. This authorisation was not a law. It is not an article of the Constitution. It is an authorisation given by Parliament, and which might be revoked or subordinated to specific conditions of reform. Finally, I have shown on several occasions, that Belgium lends to the Congo State her officers, her diplomatists, her officials. She might at least subordinate a continuation of this to the accomplishment of the reforms which are essential. We are, therefore, armed. It is not the power to act, but the will which the Government lacks, and I must add that I do not expect much from it, because the characteristic of its policy during the last few years has been complete acquiescence in everything which the Sovereign of the Congo State has done."—M. EMILE VANDERVELDE, leader of the Belgian Labour Party in the Belgian Chamber, February 20, 1906.

"Contrary to its duty, the Belgian Government has constituted itself the systematic defender of the Congo administration. From 1895 onwards, the conspiracy against truth has been organised from top to bottom under well-nigh unbelievable conditions, in order to hide the crimes committed on the Congo."—M. COLFS, Catholic Member of the Government majority, in the Belgian Chamber, February 20, 1906.

ON February 20, 1906, there began in the Belgian Chamber a debate* on the Congo question. It

* This debate was translated verbatim by the author, and was published in book form by the Congo Reform Association, May, 1906.

was renewed on the 27th and 28th of that month, and, again, on March 1 and 2. It was concerned chiefly with the report of the Commission of Inquiry, published after long delay by the Congo Government. The debate closed with the voting of the following resolution, which it is necessary to reproduce in order to arrive at a clear comprehension of the position :—

"The House, imbued with the ideas which presided over the foundation of the Congo State and inspired the Act of Berlin, renders homage to all those who have devoted themselves to this civilising work. And, seeing the conclusions of the Commission of Inquiry instituted by the Congo State, confident in the proposals which the Committee of Reform is elaborating, and the consequences which will be given to them, decides to proceed without delay to the examination of the projected law of the 7th August, 1901, on the government of the colonial possessions of Belgium."

M. Masson (Liberal) proposed the following addition :—

"Considering that before any discussion on the eventual annexation of the Congo by Belgium takes place, Belgium must be furnished with elements of appreciation as to the consequences which might arise from annexation, without pre-judging the principle of the latter, it is especially necessary that the Belgian Government should demand from the Congo State the communication of all documents, accounts, and reports calculated to enlighten Parliament."

This proposal was rejected by a majority of 26 votes, 147 deputies voting.

M. Colfs (Catholic) proposed a resolution of which the following is the substance :—

"The Chamber, considering that grave abuses have taken place in the Congo, considering that, notwith-

standing reiterated promises, they have not been remedied . . . calls upon the Government to suspend permits to Belgian officers for service in the Congo until a different state of affairs has been inaugurated compatible with the dignity of the Belgian army."

Eighty-eight Deputies out of 119 voting, declared themselves against M. Colf's resolution.

The resolution actually voted, then amounted, in its constructive aspect, to this. M. Beernaert had in 1901 brought forward a proposal that the Congo should be annexed to Belgium. The Cabinet adopted it, and presented to Parliament a Bill entitled "Projected Law on the Government of the Colonial Possessions of Belgium." It is unnecessary for our present purpose to examine the reasons which induced King Leopold to oppose the project, and the Cabinet to withdraw it in the face of that opposition. Suffice it to say that the Bill had been dropped, and from that moment until the vote of March 2, 1906—a space of five years—it had been accumulating cobwebs in the Government's pigeonholes. The Chamber had now decided that this Bill should be resurrected and brought before it. In other words, the Chamber decided that it should once again take up the question of annexing the Congo to Belgium.

It is impossible, with any regard to accuracy of judgment, to follow the events which have transpired since this action of the Belgian Parliament, or to estimate intelligently the part played by the Foreign Office in these events, without pausing to examine the attitude displayed by Belgian Ministers towards the Congo between the dropping of the Bill and its resuscitation. What during all these years had been the position assumed by the

Belgian Government? Had Belgian Ministers been moved at all by a state of affairs which had provoked debates in three Legislatures and sown disgust and indignation throughout the civilised world? What was the record of Belgian Ministers in the matter?

The condition of the Congo natives and the nature of King Leopold's rule were already known to two or three men in England, by 1901—before that, but I merely take this date by way of illustration—who were doing their best to rouse Public Opinion. The state of affairs was better known in Belgium, where terrible atrocities committed by the representatives of the Mongalla (Anversoise) Company had been revealed from Belgian sources. In Germany, too, protests had arisen against the policy of the Congo State: the Hamburg and Bremen Chambers of Commerce had memorialised the Chancellor.

Very fierce language was used in 1901 in the Belgian Chamber when the Belgian Government decided to drop the draft Colonial Law.* These were the days when the more bestial forms of atrocities were still in full swing. The Congo was sweating blood and rubber from every pore, and the profits of the rubber companies reached gigantic figures. The King, too, was drawing at that time (but this was not publicly known) some £200,000 *per annum* from the Crown domain territory alone. The Belgian Chamber resounded with the passionate protests of Emile Vandervelde and Georges Lorand, whose fearless courage throughout this struggle is the one redeeming feature in Belgian action.

* July 16 and 17, 1901.

But the Congo Government was stoutly defended by the Belgian Cabinet which, from the start, never attempted to adopt even a moderately neutral attitude. The stories were false, and every one who said they were true was a liar. That was all Belgian Ministers had to say on the subject.

"I ardently and sincerely trust," declared M. Vandervelde on that occasion, "that the policy you are following may not one day end by compromising, not only the future of the Congo but the very existence of an independent Belgium."

In March, 1903—two months before the debate in the Commons—M. Vandervelde again brought the Congo to the notice of the Chamber. The Belgian Government took up a more definite attitude in one sense. Belgium, said the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Baron de Favereau, had no responsibility for what took place in the Congo. He nevertheless protested with much indignation against the charges levelled at the Congo Government—

"How dare people bring such allegations forward and give to them Belgian Parliamentary publicity? How dare people do so in presence of the enormous efforts, known to all, which have been made to civilise the Congo and introduce therein every form of modern progress?"

And much more to the same effect. M. Woeste, leader of the Catholic Party—the Parliamentary Right—spoke of the Congo as "one of the most marvellous enterprises in the history of colonisation." M. Woeste has long been the dictator of the Belgian Clerical Cabinets, and it is he, more than any man, who is responsible for the identification of that Party in the Belgian State with the King's Congo policy. M. Woeste's body lives in

the twentieth century, but his brain dwells amid the crude barbarisms of the sixteenth—so far as the treatment of native races is concerned. Next to King Leopold he has been the evil genius of the Belgian people in this terrible contemporary tragedy.

Once more, in July of the same year, after the vote in the Commons, was the Congo discussed in the Belgian Chamber, the subject being introduced by M. Vandervelde and M. Lorand, when many facts pointing to the misgovernment of the Congo, the subordination of the administrative machine to the collection of rubber and ivory, were advanced—all from Belgian sources. The Belgian Government was implored, for the good name of Belgium, to compel the Congo administration to institute an Inquiry. The Belgian Government did not appear to be in the least affected by the circumstance—a grave one, it would have appeared, for Belgium—that both political parties in the country to which Belgium owed her existence as a nation, were agreed as to the flagrant culpability of a Government whose head was the King of the Belgians, although acting in an autocratic and not in a constitutional capacity. The Foreign Minister took the same line as before; Belgium "had no right to mix herself up in the affairs of an independent State." But Baron de Favereau was not content with that. He adopted, lock, stock and barrel, the conceptions of the Congo Government. In the course of a long defence of the Congo System of slave-labour he denied that the abuses were systematic. "Forced labour" was inevitable in dealing with a primitive people. English opinion was misinformed. M. Woeste followed

suit in the same vein, and after M. Woeste, the Premier, M. de Smet de Naeyer, who pronounced the classic phrase in this story of the Congo: "The native is entitled to nothing. What is given to him is a pure gratuity."

"Of that phrase," said M. Lorand, three years later, recalling it to the Chamber, "a man has been found to make a system."

On February 28, 1905, Messrs. Bertrand and Vandervelde interpolated Ministers on the financial obligations of the Congo State and the responsibilities which might accrue therefrom for Belgium. The debate broadened out into the question of the ill-treatment of the natives, and the Premier denounced M. Vandervelde and his friends as "bad patriots," to which the latter returned the pithy answer: "How can you accuse us of being bad patriots when we attack a foreign State?" M. Vandervelde asked for assurances that the evidence taken by the Commission of Inquiry would be published, to which the Minister for Foreign Affairs replied by again invoking Ministerial irresponsibility—

> "It is not my business, and as Minister for Foreign Affairs I hold too strongly to the doctrine which regulates international relations, to put to a foreign Government a question which concerns exclusively its own Sovereign rights."

A few days later the indefatigable Emile Vandervelde, who is one of the few distinguished personalities in the Belgian Chamber and whose single-minded conduct all through this affair is now admitted, even by his bitterest foes, found occasion to return to the subject, on the War Office vote.

In an eloquent speech, which was to have a sensational sequel, he pointed to the demoralisation wrought in the Belgian army by employing in the service of this "foreign Government" officers whose sole duty it was to obtain ivory and rubber by any means, fair or foul. Violently assailed by M. Delbeke—now a member of the Belgian Government, then, like his colleague Belgium's present Colonial Minister, an administrator of one of the Congo rubber companies—who charged him with being in league with "interested foreigners," and by M. Woeste and Baron Béthune, another distinguished *congolâtre*, M. Vandervelde kept silence. A fortnight later, the same supply vote being in question, an extraordinary scene occurred. M. Vandervelde, amplifying his previous charge, said that Belgian officers were incited to infamous deeds by receiving commissions on the rubber and ivory they succeeded in making the natives of their districts disgorge. The Minister for War and the Premier sprang to their feet with a denial, whereupon M. Vandervelde read out to a momentarily astounded House the official circulars establishing these commissions and even fixing the scale with a minuteness which would have done credit to the management of an industrial concern.

Sufficient mention of these voluminous debates in the Belgian Chamber has, I think, been made to show that, up to this point, the tactics of the Belgian Government and its principal supporters had consisted, first, in disclaiming on behalf of Belgium any responsibility for the acts of the Congo Government, and any right to make representations to that "foreign Government." And,

in the second place, to deny that that "foreign Government" had infringed the Berlin Act to which Belgium was a signatory party, to defend it with the greatest energy, to uphold its principles and to declaim with virtuous indignation against those who dared to suggest that it connived or tolerated abuses arising out of the application of those principles. But the Belgian Government did not stop there. The diplomatic and consular machinery of Belgium all over the world was utilised in favour of the Congo Government. Belgian diplomatists and consuls wrote to the papers, communicated with members of foreign legislatures, participated actively in the scurrilous propaganda of the Press Bureau; and, on occasion, did not hesitate to entertain relations with creatures of the King who were shown later on to have made direct and indirect attempts to bribe the private secretary of an American Senator who was bringing a Congo motion before the House of Representatives. The Belgian Minister at Washington, the Belgian Consul-General in London—whose language was brought to the notice of the House of Commons by Mr. Emmott—the Belgian Consul in Edinburgh, the Belgian Consuls in Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, and even in British Colonies—from India to Nigeria—became enthusiastic devotees of the "foreign Government" on the Congo.

By a considerable stretch of imagination, and by paying no regard to facts upon which light has since been shed, it might be argued that this attitude of Belgian Ministers—after all, other Belgian Ministers *had* been known, in times gone by, to stand up to the King—was, partly at any rate, to be accounted for by ignorance of the truth.

But even that excuse could not be pleaded when the report of the Commission of Inquiry, presided over by a Belgian magistrate high up in the judicial hierarchy, was at length given to the world. Did the attitude of the Belgian Government undergo any modification? Quite the opposite. The effect of the report was to intensify that attitude. The five days' debate alluded to at the beginning of this chapter was opened with a powerful speech by M. Vandervelde, who again urged the Belgian Government to withdraw its officers from the Congo, and who was supported in the debate by several other speakers, notably by the venerable M. Janson (titular Liberal leader), M. Georges Lorand (Liberal), Heer Daens (Flemish independent), and by M. Colfs (Catholic), the only member of the clerical majority who has had the courage to dissociate himself from the blind support given to the Cabinet, on the Congo question, by the Party as a whole. M. Colfs made use on that occasion of some remarkable words, which I have quoted at the head of the chapter, and which typify, as nothing that a foreigner could write would do, the real situation in Belgium as it was then and as it remains to-day. One other extract from M. Colfs' speech may be commended to M. Hilaire Belloc: "Our missionaries," he said (Belgian Catholic missionaries), "have less liberty than foreign missionaries. They are expected to keep silence. . . . There is a gag. This gag is placed in the mouths of Belgian missionaries."

What of the Belgian Ministers and their followers? In the teeth of the Commission's report, the Minister for Foreign Affairs denounced in infuriated language, "an abominable Press campaign

which had not hesitated to calumniate": * the Belgian Government could not be "held responsible for acts in which it had not participated": it would be "contrary to every principle of international law that a Government should interfere in the internal administration of a Sovereign State": the "glorious work of the Congo Administration" was "above all attack." For the rest, a renewed defence of the Congo Government, its system and everything about it. M. Woeste, not to be outdone, contributed a panegyric on the Congo Government and its founder; its system was justified in law and by necessity; he would say to the Congo State: "Courage, allow the flood of calumnies to pass." The Premier echoed the words of his colleague—

> "After the incontestable proof which the Congo Government has given of its wisdom, its foresight, and its perseverance in the development of its internal organisation, to deny it the intention, will and energy to bring about reforms which may be necessary, and to remove abuses, is to inflict upon it an outrage against which reason and justice protest."

Then followed an elaborate defence of the Congo "System": the report of the Commissioners had justified coercion—was the Chamber to over-ride the report? The appropriation of the products of the soil was not irreconcilable with the terms of the Berlin Act.

Such, then, was the record of the Belgian Government in regard to the Congo when the Foreign Office, which had refrained from taking action against the Congo Government in 1904, 1905 and the early part of 1906, persisted in its attitude

* This referred, of course, to the British movement for reform.

when faced with King Leopold's June manifesto on the ground that there should be no suggestion, "by word or deed, that any attack was being made upon the Belgian Government or people," * and that "Belgium, so far as we are concerned, is encouraged, and not embarrassed by anything we may do." † Admirable sentiments, greeted by a chorus of derision from four-fifths of the Belgian Press. Admirable sentiments, but somehow difficult to reconcile with the public declarations and actions of Belgian Ministers who had shown that *they* were not in the least embarrassed—in adopting wholesale and retail the Leopoldian System.

From this point onwards the policy, or lack of policy, of the Foreign Office towards the *Congo* Government ceases to be a relevant issue. Sir Edward Grey had declared *a* policy. It was Belgian annexation. Well and good. But what sort of Belgian annexation? An annexation which would sweep the Leopoldian System from the face of the earth, or an annexation which would perpetuate it? For Sir Edward Grey the test would be, not one of statesmanship only, but of character.

Later on, on November 20, the Foreign Secretary assured the country that Belgian annexation would—

"produce not a list of reforms for the Congo, but an entire change in the system of government of the country." ‡

* Lord Fitzmaurice, July, 1906.

† Sir E. Grey, July, 1906.

‡ To the National Deputation which waited upon him at the Foreign Office on November 20, 1906, introduced by Lord Monkswell, President of the Congo Reform Association. In his opening remarks

Against an annexation of that kind hardly a voice was raised in criticism.* It would be a hard fight, but Sir Edward Grey would win. He would never allow Belgium to become responsible for the infamous policy followed for so long by the Congo State. Resolutions of support poured in from every part of the country for an annexation involving a radical, thorough, comprehensive change of *régime:* the restoration to the natives of their elementary human rights, the re-establishment of legitimate trade, the disappearance of the reign of slavery, shame and terror.

The need for an early, a clear and explicit definition of the British demands following upon this virtual declaration in favour of the "Belgian solution," became imperative. Indeed the temper exhibited by the Belgian Government—as here shown—seemed to suggest that it would have been wiser to have amplified the declaration of policy by the definition of the terms: to have made them simultaneous. I extract from a representation made to Sir Edward Grey at that time the following passage:—

"The Congo question will never enter upon the stage of a definite solution until some Great Power, preferably

Sir Edward Grey said: "The Government, of course, is well aware of how strong the feelings on this subject in the country are. We have been well aware of it in the Foreign Office, and, no doubt, some of my colleagues in the Cabinet have been aware of it, by the number of resolutions which we have received from all parts of the country. If I had made any calculation of the actual number we have received, it would no doubt be considerable. But far more impressive than the mere statement of the number of resolutions sent in from different parts of the country is, I think, the *personnel* of the present Deputation. It is representative of a feeling which is widespread and influential."

* Except in Belgium where a strong party was against annexation at any price.

Great Britain, challenges in its juridical and other aspects the conception which has been substituted in the Congo Basin for the Afro-European trade system which prevails throughout the African tropics except in the Congo Basin."

The echoes of Sir Edward Grey's assurance that a Belgian annexation of the Congo "would produce, not a list of reforms for the Congo, but an entire change in the system of the government of the country," had hardly died away, when proof was forthcoming that, short of an immediate and firm stand by the Foreign Office, Belgian annexation would secure no such change.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FOREIGN OFFICE AND THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT, 1907

"The King is there to see that reforms shall not be radical. He will remain the master afterwards as before. It is this that the English do not appear to understand, because I do not doubt the sincerity of their good-will towards us, but I think their policy wholly contrary to the object they are pursuing. If they compel us to annex —for that is what it comes to—a conflict between England and Belgium is inevitable, because these reforms will not be effected. Not because the Belgians will put ill-will or wickedness into the balance—they would only be too pleased to see the natives happy—but they are not actively interested in the affairs of the Congo. They are, on the contrary, profoundly indifferent, and when they know how many millions reform will cost, they will object. The only Belgians who are interested in the Congo are the King and his financial bodyguard —solely interested in making money. No one in Parliament has even a mandate from his constituents to interest himself in the natives. The proof is to be found in the fact that, with a few individual exceptions, there has been no Belgian movement of protest against the Congo horrors, even after the disclosures of the Commission of Inquiry. The report was not read. People are not interested in it. People do not believe it. The public is indifferent, because the public is ignorant. That is the truth, and that is why the English are indulging in illusions, and that is why they will end, without having desired it, in creating between their country and ours a permanent conflict on the subject of Congo reform."—M. GEORGES LORAND, *Deputé* for Viron in the Belgian Chamber, September, 1907.

NINE months had elapsed since the vote of the Belgian Chamber resolving to enter upon an "immediate" examination of the Colonial law, and absolutely nothing had been accomplished to that end. The draft charter, drawn up in 1901, still remained in the Cabinet's archives.

Nine months of intensified oppression in the Congo. Nine months of accumulating information; official and unofficial. Nine more months acquired to King Leopold's credit in the process of gaining time. Nine more months of martyrdom for the Congo races.

The Foreign Office had received reports from its Consular staff—

"The people are all disheartened and are unanimously of the opinion that they were better off under the Arabs. . . . The Congo is taxed unmercifully, and I know of no country that has less money spent upon it. The taxpayer gets literally nothing for the life of practical slavery he has to spend in the support of the Government." *

The famous recommendations of the Committee of Reform were everywhere working out in *increased* demands upon the natives. The treatment of the British missionary, Edgar Stannard, had led to a petition to the Foreign Office, signed by forty missionaries, praying that British Consular jurisdiction might be established. The Foreign Office, with that excessive patience avowed in a moment of frankness by Earl Percy, waited.

Nearly *three years had gone by* since the publication of Consul Casement's report, and the Congo natives still paid the uttermost toll to their beneficent absentee ruler.

Then a debate, lasting over nine days, began in the Belgian Chamber. Into the squabble between the King and his Parliament, upshot of the royal manifesto of June, which formed the main point at issue, it is unnecessary to enter. It resolved itself

* Vice-Consul Michell to Sir Edward Grey, September, 18 1906.

largely into the question as to who was to get the lion's share of the spoils of the Congo—the King or Belgium. The question of native treatment was left almost wholly in the background. One might rejoice at the Belgian Parliament proclaiming the intangibility of its constitutional prerogatives, but the wrangling over the "demesnes" and revenues while a people was dying in the grip of a relentless slavery, produced a feeling of nausea. The debate, however, was invaluable as an indication to the Foreign Office of the resistance it would meet in obtaining an annexation ensuring "a complete change in the system of government."

When the time came to negotiate a Treaty of Transfer from the Congo State to Belgium, declared the Belgian Premier, "Belgium would act from the standpoint of the exclusive interests of Belgium and her future colony." Belgium "intends to remain absolute mistress of her deeds and destinies," declared M. Hymans, a Liberal doctrinaire who has visions of a future Premiership, and has steadily supported the Clerical Government in the matter of the Congo; he was, he said, in favour of annexation, "provided it was an annexation free from all foreign interference." M. Van den Heuvel, Minister for Justice, painted a glowing picture of the King's Congo policy. M. Woeste followed in his habitual strain. To say that the Congo State was the creation of the Berlin Act was absurd: "The Act of Berlin gives to no Power the right of intervention in the Congo," whereat M. Huysmans, another Liberal doctrinaire in the camp of M. Hymans, and a member of the Superior Council of the Congo State, declared, "The whole Chamber is agreed thereon." The Congo, continued M.

Woeste, was a "pearl." "What did Mr. Morel want? To upset the good relations between England and Belgium?" M. Renkin, Belgium's future Colonial Minister, in whom the Foreign Office professes so touching a confidence, also agreed that the "Berlin Act gives to no Power the opportunity of interfering in the internal affairs of the Congo"; Mr. Morel's practices "are dishonest"; the land policy of the Congo State was legitimate, the appropriation of the produce of the soil was justified; "property is a monopoly, but it is not a monopoly of trade"; "forced labour was necessary or civilisation was stopped." This is the jesuitical casuist whom Sir Edward Grey can be induced by his advisers to believe in! "You have said enough to be appointed Minister," shouted a Liberal Deputy. He was a true prophet. M. Jules Renkin is a man after the Sovereign's own heart.

M. Huysmans spoke of the "outrageous demands of Mr. Morel and his acolytes." It was "false and inaccurate" to contend that the Congo State had received a mandate at Berlin; the Congo State had violated no clause of the Berlin Act. M. Carton de Wiart—brother of the King's private secretary—maintained that the Congo State had observed the Berlin Act, "but even if it had not, no intervention was justified." M. A. Delbeke, of whom we have heard already, now a Cabinet Minister, affirmed that the alleged obligations of the Congo State under the Berlin Act were a "legend." The closing speeches in the debate summed up the Belgian Government's position, which M. Vandervelde had, earlier in the discussion, described thus: "What you wish, in brief, is the

perpetuation in the future of the system at present existing."

The Belgian Government and their supporters made no secret of the fact that they stood for the maintenance of the System under which the land and the products of the Congo should be treated as the property of Belgium, inheritor of the Congo State. Belgium would not only annex the Congo, she would annex its System—

"Without the agricultural and mineral resources of the national domain"—declared the Premier—"the Congo is not worth a penny."

The natives, deprived of their negotiable wealth in these agricultural resources, would be held down to enrich the metropolis by forced labour so-called.

"What the Sovereign wants," continued M. de Smet de Naeyer, "is that all this should be accomplished *without the Belgian taxpayer having to supply the needful*, and that is why he attaches capital importance to the national domain of the Congo being maintained."

The mentality of the Belgian governing element is so well typified in the following short dialogue that I cannot forbear to reproduce it—

"*M. Lorand:* You exploit the negroes instead of exploiting the Belgian taxpayers. *M. de Smet de Naeyer:* Can civilisation be founded without having for its basis the Christian law of work? *M. Vandervelde:* Leave Christianity out of this. *M. de Smet de Naeyer:* Would you allow the native to wallow in idleness and sloth? When free labour is impossible to obtain, it is a thousand times better to impose forced labour than to leave the native to his demoralising idleness."

Had the Foreign Office received fair warning of what it might expect in seeking to obtain an annexation which would entirely change the system of government in the Congo?

Early in 1907, the Congo Reform Association issued an Appeal to Parliament—*

"But the pressing need," it said, "of the present situation is a declaration on the part of Great Britain that annexation, if it is to take place, must be in conformity with the Act of Berlin; in other words that it must entail a total reversal of the System which for fifteen years has plunged the Congo peoples in unutterable misery."

The appeal was warmly supported by the Press.

"The root of the whole difficulty"—observed the *Times*—"is the economic scandal. At present, throughout the greater part of the vast area of the Congo State, the native is absolutely debarred from the free exchange of the produce of the soil. He collects it and hands it over, either for nothing, or for the merest pittance, to the State authorities or to the great monopolist Companies created by the State. He gains nothing by the proceeding, and naturally is only induced to work by compulsion, unsparingly and brutally applied by native levies." †

* *The Tragedy of the Congo, An Appeal to Parliament.* By E. D. Morel.

† "Above all things, let it be remembered that the clear enunciation of a definite policy by Great Britain will have the enormous advantage"—remarked the *Morning Post*, which has always been sound upon this question—"of hastening, either by international action, or by the securing of definite guarantees from Belgium, the settlement of a question which does not present to-day any serious obstacles in the way of a solution, but which contains within it, if neglected or abandoned to a mere surface remedy, seeds of great future complications in Africa, with not improbable after effects in Europe."

Thenceforth, throughout the whole of 1907 and the early part of 1908, the efforts of all those who shared the opinions of the writer, and they appeared to be very widely held, were concentrated upon preventing an annexation going through on the basis of the maintenance of the old System; the consummation, in short, of an annexation which would be illusory, which would not bring about that "entire change in the system of government of the country," postulated by Sir Edward Grey in his address to the national deputation.

This the Foreign Office was in the position to have prevented at any time. Nor did its spokesmen attempt to deny the fact. They did not hesitate, indeed, to admit it. But they objected to the expediency of the course urged upon them. That blessed word "expediency," soothing balm to stem the life-blood oozing from the vitals of Central Africa! The Foreign Office had but to say to Belgium, in effect: "We welcome your annexation of the Congo and the fact that we do is proof of the unselfishness of our aims. But it must be an annexation which gives Belgium a free hand to inaugurate a complete change of System, to synchronise with the vote of the Chamber if the Chamber decides to annex, and which shall, at the same time, afford the necessary guarantees that this change will take place. In view of certain language and certain sentiments which have been expressed we are bound to say, in what we conceive to be the interests of Belgium herself, and for the preservation of the friendly relations between our two countries, as well as in the interests of the natives and for the fulfilment of our own national commitments, that we cannot agree with the view

representing an annexation of the Congo merely as a matter of Belgian domestic concern, and that we cannot permit an annexation of the Congo which leaves the old System in being. In all friendliness, we are bound to press for definite guarantees before the matter has gone any further. Failing their production we shall be reluctantly compelled to take such measures ourselves as will constitute for us the guarantees we require."

What were the arguments put forward by the Foreign Office against the adoption of the course of action urged upon it, not only by the Congo Reform Association, but on all sides, and what were the counter arguments? "If we do this," the Foreign Office replied, in effect, "we shall smash Belgian annexation, for there is little enthusiasm over it in Belgium as it is, and if Belgian annexation is smashed, what in the world is going to happen?" Nothing else was advanced in justification of the policy of "sit down" (beyond, of course, the usual diplomatic expressions of faith in the good intentions of the Belgian Government, contained in the despatches and in the speeches in Parliament) when, as happened repeatedly in 1907, private deputations, parliamentary, ecclesiastical, and others, were received at the Foreign Office. The Foreign Office view was met by pointing out that if Belgian annexation meant a perpetuation of the Leopoldian System, upon which the King was concentrating all his powers, no consequences which might flow from an abandonment or withdrawal of annexation would be comparable with the disastrous results attending such a consummation. At the very worst, if annexation fell through, the position would revert to the *status quo ante.*

The Congo Government would remain to be dealt with, and it had lost sympathy everywhere. The Foreign Office had only to face again, and face under totally different circumstances, what it had itself invited in 1903, viz., a Conference of the Powers. The United States Government had declared itself favourable to another conference. Was it conceivable that another Power, or Powers, would oppose Great Britain and the United States, if either one, or both those Powers, took action under their separate treaties with the Congo State to impel a Conference? Where could a hostile combination be found? We were the allies of France. Did that alliance, then, count for nothing when British diplomacy had ends to serve? We were on friendly terms with all the Great Powers, signatories to the Berlin Act, save one perhaps. Our relations with Germany were, it is true, not of the best. But might not this be the very means of improving them? In years gone by Germany had herself sounded us as to the advisability of a Conference; was German suspicion of our motives altogether strange in view of the past, so long as British diplomacy was not exerted to remove it? German interests had suffered through the Leopoldian monopoly. The last interview between the Kaiser and King Leopold, as the Foreign Office knew, had been the reverse of cordial. In any case Germany would not logically stand out of a Conference, much less oppose one if British action forced it. All the circumstances pointed to Great Britain as the natural initiator of steps impelling a Conference. Nor was it conceivable that a Conference of the Christian Powers would deliberately endorse the legality of a System which decreed the

development of the African tropics by slave labour, doomed the native races to servitude and destruction, spread far and wide an intense hatred of the white man in the negro heart, was in its essence anti-economic, and hence antagonistic to the world's interests, and menaced the very fabric of civilisation in the Dark Continent? The condemnation of the Leopoldian System must be the first outcome of a Conference which would deal with principles and policy, and not, as the Arbitration Court at the Hague would do, with legal technicalities. No doubt difficulties would ensue. But those difficulties had been brought about by just that very policy of inaction which the Powers had followed up to the present, and a continuation of it would only make the difficulties greater still in the long run. It was incumbent upon the Powers, if not for their own honour, then in their own interest, to stop the pillage and extirpation of the races of Central Africa. Had the Continent ever *led* in a matter of this kind? The existing situation was admittedly impossible, and such difficulties as they were must be faced with courage and with a resolve to overcome them. If political partition, arising out of a Conference, were undesirable, the elements of a machinery of Government could be evolved from the Navigation Commission provided in the Berlin Act and several times referred to by Lord Fitzmaurice, who had originally assisted in drawing it up. The provisions of the Navigation Act amounted virtually to a scheme of international control over the river, its affluents and its normal trade; in such a condominium, Belgium could play an honourable share. Many Belgians favoured that development and had spoken in favour of it,

not only in Parliament, but at public meetings where it had received support. Was diplomacy really incompetent to deal with a piratical enterprise which called itself a "State" and maintained in Africa, with the capital of a small neutral European country for base, 1500 white men and 25,000 native soldiers to pirate the natural wealth and enslave the native peoples, and which had broken every pledge its ruler ever made?

Passing from these considerations, it was urged upon the Foreign Office in favour of the line of action recommended that an illusory annexation would find England opposed, not by the Congo Government, but by the Government of Belgium. It would be no longer a struggle against an irresponsible autocrat, but against a constitutional Government, and consequently, it would be a struggle offering many additional and obvious embarrassments. It was patent that the King and his Ministers did not believe that we were in earnest and were prepared to brave us to the last. Belgian Ministers had made the pretensions of the King their own. They had endorsed all his arguments, even his repudiation of the Berlin Act as an instrument possessed of any tangible power to control the policy of the Congo administration. Even from the standpoint of historical friendliness to the Belgian people, was not a categorical definition of the British position at this moment greatly preferable to a policy of *laissez faire* flavoured with repeated expressions of faith in the intentions of the present Belgian Cabinet? Would it not be a fundamental error to identify the Belgian people, in this matter, with a Cabinet which had not consulted the Belgian people, or

taken them into its confidence and whose public acts and expressions were on record? Was it fair to the Belgian people that they should be drawn into so vast an enterprise, so doubtful an adventure without having had the opportunity, which the Cabinet declined to give them, of pronouncing upon it one way or another? The mass of the Belgians were altogether incapable at present of forming an opinion: they were not acquainted with the facts. This the Foreign Office knew well. Many Belgians viewed annexation itself with disapproval. Others preserved an open mind until they were in receipt of full information, which they were convinced would only be furnished to them by outside pressure upon the Congo Government. Would not an annexation on the basis of a policy which, in effect, violated not only the moral law, but Treaty obligations with every Power in Europe, expose the Belgians sooner or later to international conflicts which might seriously endanger their independence? Would not the Belgian people if, presently, they saw themselves faced with such complications and with heavy financial liabilities in connection with the Congo, rightly hold England responsible for having allied herself with the Belgian Government now in power in forcing annexation upon them? A Belgian annexation of the Congo on satisfactory terms, might or might not be the best solution of a difficulty which had attained proportions it need never have attained but for the inaction of the Powers; but was it not obvious on the face of it, from every conceivable point of approach, that a Belgian annexation on unsatisfactory terms, involving the maintenance of the present System, was the worst "solution" which could possibly be

imagined? Considerations, not only of humanity but of statesmanship and common prudence, demanded that at all costs an illusory annexation should be resisted; but every month that went by without a definite declaration of intentions on the part of the British Government from which the British Government would on no account recede, increased the danger that an illusive annexation would take place.

Where is the man who will be prepared to get up and say that these arguments, which are embodied in dozens of written representations and in the minutes of private conversations, were the arguments of philanthropic fanatics, irresponsible amateurs, miserable sentimentalists unable to exercise foresight and innocent of constructive thought? Sir Edward Grey met them to the extent of announcing, in reply to a question in the House, that Belgium in annexing the Congo would be bound by the terms of the Berlin Act, and that the opinion of H.M. Government as to the right of the native to buy and sell freely in the produce of the soil, remained the same as stated in the British Note to the Powers of August 1903, which had laid down that, "so long as the produce can only be collected by the native, the native should be free to dispose of that produce as he pleases."

But both these asseverations—the former if not in form at least in substance—had been repudiated by the Belgian Government. To re-assert them was one thing: to assert that you intended to abide by them and to get your own way was quite another. And Sir Edward Grey would go no further than the re-assertion. The *impasse* was looming on the horizon, and these statements,

satisfactory in themselves, served but to accentuate the fundamental divergence between the British contention and the pretensions of Belgian Ministers. With every month that passed the Foreign Office was allowing matters to drift into a position which could only end either in an open diplomatic conflict with Belgium, or in the abandonment, in effect, if not in actual words, of the principles at stake and consequently of the whole case for the natives and for freedom of commerce, in which their economic rights and *a fortiori* their human liberties are inseparably intertwined.

And with every month that passed fresh evidence was supplied, largely by the Foreign Office itself, that the condition of affairs in the Congo remained altogether unaltered. The reports of the Consular staff had confirmed, explicitly and implicitly, the predictions conveyed in the Memorial I had the honour to submit to the Foreign Office on behalf of the Congo Reform Association as to the farcical nature of the recommendations of the Committee of Reform.* It is well to add that the conditions of the natives continued as before, all through 1908, continue to this day, and must continue, until the System which is the *causa causans* of those conditions, disappears. I reproduce below some extracts from the Consular reports received in 1907 :—

"Hitherto the impressment of labourers has been illegal; now it is permitted. But I am not aware of any civilised State in which conscription is applied to 'works of public utility.' . . . The *travailleurs salariés* (paid workmen) are the conscripts! They are hunted in the

* July, 1906.

forest by soldiers, and are brought in bound by the neck like criminals." *

"Here, as elsewhere, the natives appeared to me to be so heavily taxed as to be depressed, and to regard themselves as practically enslaved by *Bula Matadi*. † The incessant call for rubber, food and labour leaves them no respite or peace of mind." ‡

"The new decrees and the circulars applying them do not, therefore, in any way modify the 'corvée' system hitherto in use. . . . The position of women, already very low in the Congo, has received no attention in the legislation of the country, and the action of the State has been to lower it vastly more. . . . Every white man has his *ménagère*. This example is followed by the black *personnel* of the post, and the consequence is there is now a large class of idle, roving females in every station. It is pitiful to see the strings of poor naked women, coming in from the villages with great loads of wood, bananas, thatching, etc., while these gaily-dressed persons strut about doing nothing. . . . The imposition of taxation on both men and women is not only a hardship, but an unmitigated evil. . . . All the porterage between the mouth of the Lindi and Banlya on the Aruwimi is, to my knowledge, done by the women. . . . I have already explained how the liberty and the property of the natives are entirely in the hands of the local white agent without appeal and without process of law. Soldiers, sailors, labourers, household servants, and all other contract workmen may be flogged by order of the white man in command without trial or defence." §

"In no other African dependency is the assessment of his contributions so wholly disproportionate to the native's means. Nowhere else does he get so little in

* Vice-Consul Michell to Sir E. Grey, November 30, 1906; received February 4, 1907.

† The Congo Government.

‡ Vice-Consul Michell to Sir E. Grey, December 26, 1906; received February 25, 1907.

§ Vice-Consul Michell to Sir E. Grey, March 23, 1907; received May 21, 1907.

return. There is no pretence at administration. . . . I am convinced that the present oppressive system is responsible for an enormous loss of life. . . . I cannot fail to point out that there exists a sentiment of widespread hatred against the white man." *

"I do not hesitate to say that the whole policy of the Congo State in every detail is its own enrichment, regardless of the inhabitant black or white, excepting so far as he is a source of profit. . . . The products of the soil, as every one knows, have been appropriated wholesale by the State. . . . If the Government responded to the duties which it has taken upon itself by appropriating the country and its inhabitants and accepting from the natives a contribution so vast that it not only pays for the whole administration, but also leaves a rich balance, it would secure the miserable native at least a decent supply of food. Instead of this it is daily impoverishing him and his country." †

"There is not the slightest doubt in my mind that the average month's work of every native is not less than twenty days.‡ . . . The undertakings of the Government are solely commercial. . . . The law forbids them (the natives) to leave their towns without special sanction from the competent authorities. The native, therefore, has no means of communication with the outside world, and they have nothing left them to exchange for supplies, such as salt,§ for which they are literally starving." ‖

* Vice-Consul Beak to Sir E. Grey, September 6, 1907; received January 7, 1908.

† Vice-Consul Michell to Sir E. Grey, September 23, 1907; received January 22, 1908.

‡ Or, say, 240 days in the year spent in gathering the raw produce of the country as a "tax" to a Government which has deprived him of all his possessions and of his liberty.

§ All primitive races feeding mainly on a vegetable or fish diet must have salt, otherwise they are swept by disease. Some of the native tribes of the Congo manufacture salt from the roots of certain plants; other tribes, of course, do not know how to do this, or the right plants do not grow near them, and they exchange—in their natural state—such produce as they have to offer against the salt sold by the other parties.

‖ Vice-Consul Armstrong to Sir E. Grey, December 17, 1907; received January 27, 1908.

"The native complains very bitterly of the hardship of this tax [food tax in native bread—Author]. . . . It is impossible for any one of them to leave their towns at any time for fear of the consequences of a shortage in supply. . . . The severity of the tax upon the women, I am told on good authority, has seriously reduced the birth-rate in the towns. . . . The frequency with which the taxes become due curtails the freedom of the native to such an extent as to preclude him from doing anything which would be of material benefit to himself or family." *

"I have the honour to transmit herewith a memorandum regarding the application of the labour tax in the Congo Free State, showing how from the administrative point of view, this tax is made the means of effecting considerable economies † in the State expenditure, and from the commercial side a source of revenue ‡ far exceeding the sum which the monetary equivalent of the tax could ever produce. In both cases it presses with extreme severity upon the native, who is practically tied down, in those districts where the tax is enforced, from one year's end to another, to a life of perpetual labour for the State." §

And so on, and so on. *Four whole years had elapsed* since Consul Casement's report had revealed the truth, and the natives of the Congo were still steadily falling beneath the scythe of Death, wielded by the hand of the manager of the "beneficent enterprise" which the Lord Mayor of London journeyed to Brussels to congratulate him upon

* Vice-Consul Armstrong to Sir E. Grey, December 18, 1907; received January 27, 1908.

† The "tax" in food-stuffs which enables the Congo administration to live on the country.

‡ The "tax" in rubber and copal which supplies the revenue and the profits.

§ Consul Thesiger to Sir E. Grey, December 31, 1907; received January 27, 1908.

creating in his thoughtfulness "for the disinherited in the far-distant land who are still deprived of all those advantages in which we are so abundantly blessed."* Is it not enough to make the cheek of every Englishman burn with anger, not only against the author of all these woes and his henchmen, but against the pusillanimity of those who, despite insult and provocation on the one hand, and earnest support from the British public on the other, have allowed their author to have his way and to fool them all along the line! And, remember, that these things are going on *now*, and that ere these lines are probably in print the British public will have had the opportunity of appreciating the glowing tribute to Belgian officials which the Belgian Colonial Minister on his return may be expected to deliver *sur tous les tons*. . . .

And, too, with every month that passed did the Belgian Government show the British Foreign Office, with increasing emphasis, its intention of perpetuating *pour la plus grande Belgique*, the policy of its philanthropic monarch. In April, 1907, the de Smet de Naeyer Cabinet resigned. In the course of another debate, which took place in the House of Commons on May 15, Sir Edward Grey declared it to be his belief that the "present Belgian Government is anxious to approach the question with the desire to secure a satisfactory solution." He would "wait to see what the conditions and scheme of annexation" would be. All

* Among the unofficial reports received in 1907, may be mentioned those from the British trader McLaren, Richard Harding Davis, the representative of *Collier's Weekly*, Messrs. Bond, Padfield, Morrison, Jeffery, Cartwright, Whitehead, Whiteside, Kenred Smith, Dodds, Forfeitt, Murdoch—British and American missionaries.

that the British Government asked was that "the present system of government, with all the abuses which have been shown and proved to be consequent upon it, and which, I fear, are inseparable from that system, should come to an end."

But that was precisely what neither the old nor the new Belgian Cabinet had the slightest intention of doing. What was the composition of the new Belgian Cabinet in which the Foreign Secretary pledged his belief as he had trusted in its predecessor, presided over by the man who had declared that "The native is entitled to nothing: what is given him is a veritable gratuity"? It included two members of the de Smet de Naeyer Cabinet, M. de Trooz, who assumed the premiership, and M. Liebaert, both involved, of course, in the old Cabinet's Congo policy. It included M. Renkin and Delbeke, with whose names the reader is now familiar. It included M. Descamps David, a member of the Superior Council of the Congo State, and the author of a book defending the Congo system. It included M. Davignon, who had sat on the Committee of Reform, and who now assumed the portfolio of Foreign Affairs. Sir Edward Grey's confidence was, to say the least, the opening of a large credit account on the side of charity. Lord Fitzmaurice was not content with expressing confidence. Lord Monkswell* had raised the Congo in the Lords on July 29, and the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs predicted that before the year was over—

"A great work would have been done ('at Brussels') for civilisation and for humanity."

Put otherwise, in Lord Fitzmaurice's view,

* President of the Congo Reform Association.

the Congo would have been annexed by Belgium before the end of 1907, on terms which would have freed Belgium from any sort or kind of complicity with the Leopoldian System, and which would have ensured the beginning of a work of atonement and redress towards the survivors of seventeen years of unbridled outrage. It seems incredible and inexplicable that such beliefs could have been entertained at the Foreign Office. But Lord Fitzmaurice was unquestionably sincere; and you can find it in Hansard.

On that occasion the Archbishop of Canterbury made the second of his notable speeches on this subject. That his Grace was voicing the sentiments of the country, as he has frequently done since on this matter, many proofs could be adduced.

"In the last debate in the House of Commons," he said, "Sir Edward Grey spoke of the gruesome unanimity with which we all regarded it. Well, that is a unanimity which ought to lead to something more than grumbling and complaining, than acquiescing in delay."

Similar views were uttered from both sides in the Commons on August 1st; but Sir Edward Grey declined to "press the matter forward" until he knew "the actual conditions" of annexation. Mark this, until he knew *the actual conditions of annexation.*

The expressed confidence of Sir Edward Grey, and the predictions of Lord Fitzmaurice, were followed by the appointment of eight delegates —four for Belgium and four for the Congo State —to draw up a Treaty of Transfer or Cession of the Congo State to Belgium. Needless to say,

the status of the delegates appointed was on a par with everything else; but it is useless to give them advertisement here since their labours became, in due course, notorious. The new Belgian Cabinet produced an amended Colonial Law which offered not the remotest sign or scintilla of a change of policy. The natives, indeed, were hardly mentioned in it at all. It provided for the retention, as valid in law, of all the legislation of the Congo State. These fresh indications of intent were set in the framework of a renewal of virulent insolence on the part of the ministerially inspired Belgian Press. The more empty words the Foreign Office contributed to the discussion, the more polite it waxed towards "Belgium"—which it continued to confound with the Belgian Cabinet—the more aggressive became the tone of the Belgian newspapers. "The problem concerns Belgium and the Congo State alone," declared the *Indépendance belge*. "The Congo question will be settled between Belgium and Belgians," echoed *l'Etoile belge*. "We will permit no foreign intervention in our domestic affairs," chimed in *La Chronique*. "The British calumnies have been twenty times refuted," said *Le Matin*. "The agitation in England is conducted by a band of public malefactors. We say so advisedly. The interests of Belgium and of the Congo State are exclusively concerned," this from *La Metropole*.

Towards the end of the year, renewed representations, both public and private, reached the Foreign Office from many quarters, to prevent, while it was yet time, by a definite statement of demands, the disgrace of a Belgian annexation

on terms perpetuating the Leopoldian System, towards which events pointed with increasing certitude, short of such a declaration.

"The agitation is no surface one due to an unreasoning humanitarianism which declines to take cognisance of existing facts," one of these representations ran. "It has not been content with merely protesting against atrocity, outrage and slavery on the Congo, but has ever sought to prove, and, indeed, may now claim to have demonstrated to the satisfaction of all men, that these perennial features of Congo misrule are due to the exercise of certain fixed principles and claims, and that short of a total reversal of these principles and claims, no change can possibly be effected so far as native conditions are concerned. . . . A definite statement from H.M. Government that these claims and principles, introduced into the Congo, must disappear; that under the contemplated new management of the Congo territories, the economic rights and human liberties of the native population must be restored; coupled with the intimation that British patience has its limits, and that the resources of British diplomacy are sufficient to secure these changes if Belgium is unable to guarantee them, would do much to reassure the public mind."

But it was all to no purpose, and on December 3, 1907, the Treaty of Transfer was published, together with its Annexes, blowing to atoms the prognostications of the Foreign Office, turning to positive ridicule Sir Edward Grey's declared belief in the anxiety of the new Belgian Cabinet "to approach the question with the desire to secure a satisfactory solution," and his previous assurance that annexation would mean a complete change in the system of government of the Congo; lighting up with sombre grotesqueness Lord Fitzmaurice's

prophecy of the "great work for civilisation and humanity" which would be hatched in Brussels before the year was out.

One year and nine months had elapsed since the Belgian Parliament had resolved to give "immediate" attention to the question of annexing the Congo, and there had been produced, not annexation, but a Treaty of Transfer and a Colonial Law which proclaimed before all the world the fixed determination of the Belgian Government to identify Belgium with the African policy of her King.

An outburst of public indignation greeted the publication of the Treaty. A great demonstration was held in the Queen's Hall, the Lord Mayor in the chair, by his side the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, and debates ensued in both Houses of Parliament. For a moment it seemed as though the Foreign Office were shaken out of its optimism, or its fixed purpose—the reader must determine that for himself when he has perused this volume to the end, if he has the patience to do so. But for a moment only. Beaten by King Leopold, out-manœuvred by his Ministers, blind to warnings, deaf to advice, untouched by humiliating experience, case hardened in invincible obstinacy, the Foreign Office was about to crown, by a further error, all the previous errors it had committed, since, in August, 1903, it laid itself open, by resting a case for international intervention upon official reports it shrunk when challenged to produce, to the first of the long series of rebuffs it had sustained.

And, during that period of four and a half years, the foreign policy of this country had been

under the direction of two statesmen of different schools; honourable and humane men, men typifying in their persons all the best traditions of English public life, and to whom these misdeeds were hateful and revolting.

Explain it as you will. There are the facts. Is there a parallel case? Surely not. But if we are to assume that the attitude of the Foreign Office had been partly attributable up to that period to lack of accurate information on the side of the bureaucratic machinery of the department, there is a parallel approaching it. On July 11, 1870, Lord Granville informed the House of Lords that upon taking the seals of office on June 5th of that year, he had been assured by the Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office that, in that official's long experience, he had not known so great a lull in foreign affairs, and that no important question existed. At that very moment the Emperor Napoleon was taking the steps to resist the Hohenzollern candidature for the Spanish crown which precipitated the Franco-Prussian war. Ten days after the assurance given to Lord Granville, France declared war.

Either there had been monumental inaccuracy at the Foreign Office in regard to the Congo, or the policy of non-intervention following the first rebuff had been deliberate and the public had been bluffed from the beginning.

The facts in the case cannot be explained in any other way. It must have been one thing or the other. Which was it?

CHAPTER XIV

THE FOREIGN OFFICE AND THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT 1908–JULY, 1909

Resolutions passed by the great meeting at the Queen's Hall, February 21, 1908.

"That this meeting of the citizens of the Metropolis presided over by its Chief Magistrate, supported by the Chief Magistrate of the Metropolis of Scotland, and by deputations from the Provinces, expresses its satisfaction at the reference to the Congo in the Gracious Speech from the Throne. It is prepared to welcome the establishment of Belgian constitutional control over the Congo, if the Belgian people themselves wish to exercise it, in the hope and on the condition that there will be a great change in the spirit of its administration, which this meeting trusts will be carried on in the spirit of the words used by M. Beernaert, Prime Minister of Belgium, at the time the Berlin Act was signed, viz.: 'The State of which our King will be the Sovereign, will be a sort of International Colony; there will be no monopolies, no privileges, absolute freedom of barter, property, commerce and navigation.' This meeting must at the same time solemnly declare that no scheme of annexation which does not restore to the native population its rights and liberties, and which does not immediately reintroduce freedom of commercial intercourse as stipulated in the Anglo-Congolese Convention of 1884, and in the Act of Berlin of 1885, can be acceptable to the people of Great Britain, whose responsibilities towards the native races of the Congo are clearly defined in these agreements." Moved by Sir John H. Kennaway, M.P., supported by Mr. J. Ramsay Macdonald, M.P., and by Sir George White, M.P.

"That this meeting, recalling that although nearly five years have passed since a unanimous House of Commons pledged itself to Congo reform, yet that nothing whatever has been done to correct the fundamental vices of Congo misrule, associates itself with the Congo Reform Association, and with the numerous public meetings held throughout the country in pressing upon H.M. Government the necessity of immediate action to secure the production of an acceptable scheme of Belgian annexation; and this meeting solemnly registers its profound conviction that it interprets the sentiments of the nation in declaring that the nation will not shrink from giving every possible support to H.M. Government in securing an adequate settlement of the Congo problem should the people of Belgium, in whose humanity this meeting believes, but to whom no opportunity

has yet been given by their rulers of expressing an opinion, decide that it is contrary to their country's interests to annex the Congo." Moved by the Earl of Mayo, seconded by Canon Scott Holland and Dr. Clifford.

[The reader is respectfully asked to consult the first of the two maps attached, in connection with this chapter.]

On April 15, 1908, M. Davignon, Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs, *ci-devant* member of the Committee for Reform, in company with the officials of an incriminated administration, introduced the Treaty of Transfer to the Belgian Chamber with these words—

"Belgium—the Government and the Chambers are unanimous in declaring it—will act in the complete independence of her sovereignty."

On May 5th, M. Davignon supplemented this *déclaration de guerre* as follows :—

"As for the conditions under which the Transfer will be effected, they will be settled by Belgium alone, that is to say by the Government in accord with the Chamber."

That week, according to the well-informed Brussels journal, *Le Patriote*, the British Minister at Brussels entertained the Belgian Premier, M. Schollaert (M. de Trooz had died in the meantime) at dinner.

The Treaty of Transfer to "Annexation Bill" consists of four articles. It will be found in the Appendix. Article I. is the crucial article. It provides that Belgium—

"will *take over and assume responsibility for the obligations of the Congo State* such as they are set forth in Annex A, and undertakes to respect the foundations * existing

* The Crown domain was, by a subsequent arrangement, named "Traité additionnel," incorporated into the National domain, the

in the Congo, as also the *acquired rights legally recognised of third parties*, natives and non-natives."

In other words, Belgium undertook by the terms of this Treaty to maintain the conception of a tropical dependency, in the light in which the over-sea possessions of European Powers were regarded in the sixteenth century. The Congo was to be treated as the *property* of the Belgian State—the "National domain" of Belgium in Africa—in contradistinction to the modern civilised conception of a tropical possession in which the European Power regards itself as over-lord, trustee for the people, their protector against foreign aggression and their helper in the economic development of their own country. For the policy which used to look upon an over-sea dependency as a source of direct profit for the metropolis, a policy which involved, as night follows day, the reduction of the inhabitants to mere hewers of wood, drawers of water and suppliers of revenue for distant aliens, had been substituted, through the slow growth of education extending over centuries—what we call the advance of civilisation—the policy which looked upon the inhabitants of an over-sea dependency as beings with economic rights of their own, entitled to a share in the benefits ensuing from commercial dealings with the European. The profits of European colonisation in tropical lands ceased to be *direct* and became *indirect*; the basis of the whole relationship established had been altered.

But Belgium, putting back the hands of the clock

King receiving monetary compensation, and the Belgian Government, in accordance with the conventions published in Annex A, took over the Abir and Anversoise concessions, which also became merged in the National domain, the *concessionnaires* sharing in the profits derived from the sale in Antwerp of the rubber and ivory extracted by the officials of the Belgian Government from these concessions.

five hundred years, had decided to revive in her own interest the old conception, at the bidding of the King, who had been permitted to revive it for the benefit of himself and his financial friends, and who had now forced it upon Belgium.

The Edicts of 1891-2 had become the national policy of Belgium. The land, the natural wealth and the human labour of the Congo passed from Leopold II., autocratic Sovereign of the Congo Free State, to Belgium. The stock-holdings of the Congo Government in the great *concessionnaire* companies, passed from that Government to the Belgian Government.

The territory of the Congo had been given another name—"Congo belge," instead of "Etat Indépendant du Congo." All else remained *in situ.* The Leopoldian system would be perpetuated under the Belgian flag. Throughout these hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of square miles in Central Africa, the produce of economic value on the world's markets, obtainable only through the labour of the native, was the possession of the Belgian State and of financial organisms controlled by the Belgian State which retained their privileges under the Belgian flag. All present riches acquired through native labour, all future riches acquired through native labour, were and would be the property of the Belgian State. As in the past, so in the days to come, the native was to be the vehicle through which these riches could be secured: not a participant in the realisation of their monetary value on the world's markets.

It was the revival, and the legalisation, of slavery as a Government institution for the profit of a small neutral State in Europe.

To this *Canossa* had the Foreign Office conducted us.

Annex A, an extremely voluminous document, contains the agreements with the financial organisms of the Congo State. The Katanga Company and the *Comité special du Katanga* is seen therein to possess its concession in "full ownership" until 1990. The Lomami Company, a right to the produce of the forests until 1936. The Kasai Company, the right to collect rubber and all other produce until 1935. The *Comptoir commercial Congolais*, the exploitation of rubber until 1934. The "*Grands Lacs*" Company, the exclusive right, apart from its railway concession, to collect rubber and all other produce "for joint account" with the Government until 2000. And so on with the mineral concessions, and the smaller "agricultural" concessions. The Belgian Government is seen to be half partner in the affairs of the Katanga monopoly; participator in the profits of the Lomami Company, *Comptoir commercial Congolais* and "*Grands Lacs*," and holds half of the Kasai Company's shares while it is bound down, as mentioned in the footnote on page 199, to an arrangement with the nominally suppressed ABIR and Anversoise Companies.

The total assets of the Congo Government at the time of the Transfer are given in the schedule attached to the Treaty. They amount to £4,893,474. Of this total, ivory, rubber and copal from the "National domain" unsold, is given at £396,200; £2,391,552 is represented by stock holdings in the concessions, and "real estate," in Belgium, estimated at a value £1,260,606, belonging to the "Foundation of the Crown" [in

other words to Leopold II., as Sovereign of the Congo State]. These account between them for four million odd pounds—the whole, a product, past and present, of slave labour. Such was the inheritance.

The Mandatories' Report and the Preamble were merely illustrative of the meaning of the Treaty. These documents point out that internationally "nothing can affect" Belgium's "liberty of action"; that the "perpetual neutrality" of the Congo was secured under the Berlin Act—fancy talking of the Berlin Act in connection with this Treaty!—and that its neutrality and Belgium's "combine and adapt themselves one to the other perfectly." The "natural indolence" of the native who supplies the revenues, in addition to feeding the swarm of human locusts let loose upon him, is casually remarked upon. Liberty of commerce we are told is "formally guaranteed in the Congo penal code"! And, finally—

"According to the conclusions of the report, the African State is now self-supporting; the expenses of the Administration are covered by the customs taxes, *and by the revenues of a National domain, capable of vast increase*, thanks to the process of development, and the debt incurred by the Congo State will *be in no sense a burden upon the Belgian taxpayer*."

As I remarked at the conclusion of the last chapter, it seemed as though the publication of the Treaty, or, perhaps, the public outcry which followed its publication, had shaken the Foreign Office. On February 26th, in the Commons, Sir Edward Grey went so far as to say—

"I go further, and say we agree that it must be a condition *precedent to any transfer of the Congo to another*

authority, that that authority should *take it over on terms* which will place it in a position to give assurances, and to guarantee that those assurances shall be carried out, and treaty obligations fulfilled."

What did this mean? That the British Government would at last send its ultimatum. Or did it mean nothing more than that the British Government would decline to recognise the Treaty if the Belgian Chamber passed it? But, if the latter, then there would be an accomplished fact; whatever the Government said or did not say, the Government would be kicking against the pricks. Was it conceivable that the Government intended to permit the consummation of that accomplished fact and protest afterwards?

The one act which could even then have saved the situation, saved the Treaty from passing, saved Belgium from her King and Ministers, was the ultimatum pleaded for in vain for so long. It might not have been called an ultimatum; it might have been called anything the Foreign Office chose, provided it were precise and conveyed Britain's intentions in an unmistakable manner. Patriotic Belgians, both those who, themselves opposed to annexation on patriotic grounds, contended that the country should at least be given the opportunity of pronouncing upon it before being committed to so grave a step; and those who, favourable to an annexation which should give the Belgian people a free hand immediately to inaugurate drastic reforms, viewed with utter dismay a Treaty binding Belgium to uphold an abominable system of slavery. No wonder they looked to England to realise their helplessness and the danger of the outlook, and to

speak out, if only from that much vaunted regard for Belgium's interests.

But Sir Edward Grey insisted, even in the face of this Treaty, upon the *bonâ fides* of the Belgian *Government*, and persisted in treating it as though it possessed a mandate to deal with the Congo from the Belgian constituencies.

The statement made by the Foreign Secretary and quoted above was accompanied by a further statement of an incomprehensible character. We did not know, he said, what the terms of the Belgian Government would be.

> "When the Belgian Government proposes its own terms to Parliament, then we can express our opinion. But as long as the matter is in solution between the King and the Belgian Government, I believe that official intervention on our part would not contribute anything to a satisfactory solution."

That statement was made on February 26, 1908. The Treaty of Transfer had been published on December 3, 1907. It was not a *suggested* treaty. It was a treaty signed and sealed by the Belgian Government and by the Congo Government. It could not be altered by the Chamber. It could only be rejected or accepted. There was only one point at issue, and it had nothing to do with the natives or the System, but simply with the question of whether the word "Foundations" mentioned in the Treaty—foundations which Belgium had to respect—should include the "Foundation of the Crown" or only the other "Foundations"; whether the "Foundation of the Crown" was to remain, or whether, by a supplementary treaty, a monetary settlement should be arrived at with the King, in

compensation for his abandonment of the Foundation of the Crown.

Public opinion in England looked like turning nasty at that time and was placated by a reference to the Congo in the Speech from the Throne.

In Belgium, opposition to the Treaty was growing. Anxiety was to some small extent permeating men's minds beyond Parliamentary circles. The Belgian Cabinet was disquieted, both by this symptom and by the explosion in England. In Belgium the danger was sought to be averted by reiterated assurances that annexation would not cost the Belgian taxpayer a farthing. M. Woeste, as determined as the King that the Treaty should pass, made a positive statement to this effect at a large meeting in the country, which was reproduced far and wide. But it was felt that while this manœuvre might be successful *if England kept quiet*, a declaration from the British Government such as was being pressed for by public opinion here would, at that moment, be fatal. So the Belgian Minister in London hurried to the Foreign Office. The Foreign Secretary was begged, in effect, to abstain—

"from any act which might be construed as interfering with the complete liberty of action of the Belgian Government in the future management of the internal affairs of the Congo." *

The Foreign Office did abstain from any such act, contenting itself with making lengthy representations as to the reforms it considered advisable, but emphasising that—

"H.M. Government merely submit these views for

* Sir E. Grey to Sir A. Hardinge, March 5 and March 27, 1908.

the friendly consideration of the Belgian Government." *

That despatch sealed the failure of Foreign Office policy. A Belgian annexation of the Congo on terms perpetuating the old System was, henceforth, inevitable. The British Government might refuse to recognise annexation when the Treaty was voted, but the accomplished fact would have taken place.

The interval between the consummation of the "great work for civilisation and humanity," to recall Lord Fitzmaurice's words, was employed by the Belgian Government in two ways. In lulling the Foreign Office—it might surely have spared itself the trouble—by a desultory "marking time" correspondence, in which it conveyed a number of *assurances*; and in multiplying proofs of its *intentions* by various bombastic repudiations in the Belgian Chamber touching "further interference." Here are specimens of the assurances—

"It is impossible as yet to state definitely and in detail the necessary measures to be introduced. It is beyond doubt that they will be inspired by the most generous sentiments. . . . Is it necessary to add that the Government of the King will see about putting them in practice *as soon as the transfer is completed.*"

The plans of the Belgian Cabinet, we were told, included

"an *immediate* amelioration in the moral and material conditions of existence of the inhabitants of the Congo. . . . The Cabinet of Brussels intends to issue and give effect to the said measures for improving the lot of the

* Sir E. Grey to Sir A. Hardinge, March 27, 1908.

natives, *as soon as ever the Annexation of the Congo and the Colonial Law have been voted by Parliament.* It has promised the Chamber of representatives to do so on more than one occasion; it has confirmed this promise to the British Government in writing; it can only to-day repeat its promises with the same earnestness and sincerity as before."

The Treaty of Transfer and the Colonial Law passed the Belgian Chamber on August 20th, the former by a majority of 29 in a House containing 166 Members, of whom only 83 voted in favour and 54 against, the remainder being absent or abstaining from voting. We shall do well to bear these figures in mind. *Only one-half the elected representatives of the "people of Belgium" voted for this Treaty;* and of those 83 how many voted solely because of Party considerations! That is no secret in Belgium, and of those who did so vote several have confessed since, either in public or in private, that it was a case of *pis aller.* Fifty-four elected representatives of the Belgian people voted against an annexation which the Belgian people, in the days to come, will remember would never have been forced upon them but for the British Government. Anything less "national" than this vote of the Chamber it would be difficult to conceive. It was a striking proof that the Belgian Government, which the Foreign Office had persisted in treating as the mandatory of the "Belgian people," possessed the right to no such title.

The Colonial Law, which was voted by eighty-three against fifty-one and nine abstentions, after every amendment designed to safeguard the liberties of the native population had been defeated, contained two provisions of capital import, but,

again, merely illustrative of the whole scheme. These were, first, that the "Colonial Council" created to assist the Minister for the Colonies—the governing body of the Congo, in short—should consist of fourteen members, *eight of whom to be nominated by the King*; secondly, that all existing legislation in the Congo—*i.e.* the legislation of the defunct Congo Government—*should retain force of law under the ægis of Belgian rule.*[1]

I shall, doubtless, be censured for my strictures upon the Foreign Office. In anticipation of that censure I venture to recall the following concluding passage in an article in the *Times* of April, 1908, which accurately reflected the opinion of those who realised the situation at that time :—

"For the Belgians and for us, and even for the natives, it would, perhaps, be better that Belgium should not annex the Congo at all than she should agree to annexation on conditions which would prove a fruitful source of fresh complications."

Yes. But Belgium never had a chance of agreeing or disagreeing. She was committed, unconsulted and ignorant of the facts, by her King and his servile Ministers to the gigantic task of administering a dependency in Central Africa nearly a million square miles in extent : a territory over which for seventeen years a savage soldiery had poured like Vandal hordes; a territory in part depopulated and its natural riches destroyed; a territory whose natural wealth had been pillaged and human labour decimated for the benefit of a royal megalomaniac and unscrupulous financiers;

[1] Article 36 of the Colonial Law.

a territory where trade had been annihilated and all that was promising in native character, enterprise, and industry ruthlessly trampled underfoot; where the fabric of native customs had been violently uprooted and wantonly demolished; where the white man had come to be regarded in native eyes as a liar and a murderer; a territory saddled with a heavy burden of debt incurred in fantastic speculations "from China to Peru."

And a British Government, professing the while the tenderest regard for "Belgian susceptibilities," had not only allowed the deal, but strengthened the hands of those who carried it through.

. . . . .

As the Belgian Government played in 1907 and 1908 for a "free hand," so it has played since annexation for "time." In his last speech on this question in the House, Sir Edward Grey announced his intention of waiting until M. Renkin, the Belgian Colonial Minister, returned from the Congo, and he hinted that if by the end of the year no change has ensued he would consider what steps he could take to vindicate our "Treaty rights." Meanwhile he declined to recognise annexation.

But annexation, an annexation maintaining a Slave System, is accomplished, and hitherto Belgian Ministers have treated our refusal to recognise it with the same contempt with which they have treated us all along. Their last despatch is a model of insolence. It represents in that respect the high-water mark yet reached.

So we wait for M. Renkin who, with much beating of the big drum, went out to the Congo to reconnoitre the ground which his Government has stolen from the native. We wait for M. Renkin,

the ardent defender of the Leopoldian *régime*, who justified in the Chamber the appropriation of the natives' negotiable wealth on the ground that "property is a monopoly: it is not a monopoly of trade."

And when M. Renkin returns, what then? Are we to assist, impotent and grumbling, at a renewal of the farce of 1906? Are we to wait months and months until M. Renkin—like the erstwhile Committee of Reform—produces *his* reforms: *real* reforms meaning "an entire change in the system of government," that is to say, suppression of slavery, suppression of slave revenues, restoration to the natives of their proprietary rights in land and produce, restoring to human labour its freedom, grants-in-aid, not one penny only, but many millions from the Belgian taxpayer? Are we to wait months, and still more months, to observe the working out of M. Renkin's reforms on the spot? Or, if M. Renkin finds the task of riding two horses at once, impracticable—which is not very likely, for M. Renkin hopes to be Premier later on—and throws up the sponge, with or without his colleagues, are we to wait months and months again while the shuffling of ministerial portfolios proceeds and another new Cabinet or another Colonial Minister likewise animated by the best of intentions and likewise nominated by the "genial"—to use M. Renkin's description in a speech at Boma this year—autocrat, examines the problem afresh?

Or will the British people declare that they have had enough? And will they insist that if by the 31st December of this year no definite measures have been taken to suppress this Slave System on

the Congo and restore its rights and liberties to a helpless and despairing race, action sure and swift shall be taken to vindicate their honour and to purge them of further complicity in the most colossal infamy that has prostituted civilisation and fouled the pages of contemporary history ?

CHAPTER XV

WHAT THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN ASKED TO DO, AND WHAT HAS NOT BEEN REQUIRED OF IT

"What misery among the natives, physical misery, moral misery!" exclaims the Jesuit missionary, Father de Vos, in his journal, extracts of which are published in *Le Patriote*, of September 2, 1909. "The country is not yet sufficiently deserted! An agent of the Government is recruiting from thirty to forty workmen for the Grands Lacs. These poor people will probably never return to the shores of the Nsele and of the Lukanga." *

It has been said, in reply to criticism passed upon the Foreign Office, that to expect the Belgian Government to alter the condition of affairs in the Congo in a few months, is unfair. The relevance of that argument to the story of the Foreign Office treatment of the Congo question is *nil*.

* The Kwango region, whence the Father writes, is 1000 miles distance from the Grands Lacs railway! In other words, these wretched natives are being dragged 1000 miles from their homes to serve for *five years* on the railway works, where they are subject to military discipline, and to the penalties provided in the Congo Penal Code for conscripts, such as flogging, which must not exceed twenty-five blows *per diem*, and can, actually, "be suspended if a wound is formed, or fainting ensues"! These labourers, as Vice-Consul Michell reports, are "hunted in the forests by soldiers, and brought in bound by the neck like criminals." In the three years 1906–08, 6500 natives were taken from their homes for this particular "work of *public* utility." Of these, 2000 were officially returned as "disappeared" by October, 1908. The natives, of course, derive absolutely no benefit from this railway.

On its merits the argument would be weighty if the contention to which it purposes to reply had been advanced. It has never been advanced. The Belgian Government has never been asked to produce a detailed plan of reforms. It is not asked to do so to-day. No reasonable human being possessed of average intelligence, still less anybody acquainted with the existing conditions of the Congo, could suppose that it lies within the competence of any European Government—not even the best intentioned of Governments, not even a Government experienced in the art of tropical colonisation—to change these conditions in a few months or years. To amass in that period all the ingredients of a process wherewith to heal the innumerable wounds inflicted upon the Congo by seventeen years of calculating tyranny would be utterly impossible.

The country has been ravaged. The natives have been destroyed in enormous numbers. Despair has so eaten into their hearts that, like other negroes, of little resisting capacity, the race is literally disappearing under the strain.

In many parts the natives are so utterly crushed that they have not the spirit of even passive resistance to the so-called "taxation" which haunts them from sunrise to sunset every day and all the days. For seventeen years, or for the proportion of time they have been individually and collectively imposed in the various regions, they have passed their lives paying "taxes." This has meant for the rubber workers, spending their existence in journeys to the forests from their homes—whole villages not infrequently emigrating—living an awful life in the forest, searching,

often knee deep, in fœtid swamp for the ever-decreasing vines, short of food and shelter, exposed to the deadly climate, to attacks of wild beasts, to superstitious fears, returning to their homes and setting out again—with perhaps a week, or a day, sometimes not even that, for repose—hungry, emaciated, weakened, their bodies racked with rheumatism and fever, splendid deposit beds for sleeping sickness and for every germ in the country. A life in itself terrible beyond imagination, and accompanied, to increase its terror, by brutal punishments. Men and women have died under it in heaps. *Botofi bo le iwa*—"rubber is death,"—has become a proverb among the natives of the Upper Congo. It has meant much the same for the collectors of copal. For the suppliers of food-stuffs it has meant everlasting toil: clearing land, preparing it, keeping it free from the onrush of the tropical vegetation, planting the manioc, weeding during growth, cultivation, carrying the product to the village, preparation which includes soaking in water to remove the poison, grinding, boiling, and then carrying the finished article ten, twenty, sometimes forty, miles to the nearest Government station; then back again to begin the same process over again. From year's end to year's end, whether the sap in the rubber vine has been rising or falling, whether the river had overflowed its banks and deluged the land, forcing the "taxpayers" to purchase the food supplies required of them from other tribes, by selling to the latter members of the taxed community if they had nothing else to offer. And so with the villages taxed in fish, in labour for porterage, in labour for the roads, in firewood for the river

steamers, etc. Every year the native has been getting fewer in numbers, more impoverished, more hopeless, racked by new and strange diseases, demoralised by the break-up of his own social system, his home, his entire outlook.

The whole scheme for these seventeen years has been run with two main objects: to make as much money as possible in the shortest possible space of time, and to spend as little as possible in the process of making it. The Congo slave, unlike the plantation slave, unlike even the *serviçal* on the San Thome cocoa plantations, has merely existed as a means to an end. His body has possessed no monetary value to his owner. He cost nothing to acquire, and if he died there were numbers of other slaves to take his place. He had to be broken to this condition of servitude, true, and that cost a certain amount in rifles and ammunition, but very little after all, and the native army and its retinue of women and "boys" has lived on the country.

Similarly with the natural resources of the land which could be converted into realisable wealth in Europe. The rubber, copal and ivory had not to be grown and tended. These articles were there. Ivory was there, and it was seized; vast stocks of it, from the large and rich native towns—when they existed. There is no large and rich native town on the Congo to-day. Rubber was there—and all that the slaves had to do was to go out into the forests and search for the vines, and tap or cut them, collect the latex (or as the case might be, pound the roots—according to the class of rubber) and bring it in. Copal was there—and all that the slaves had to do was to dig

it up and bring it in. The larger the quantities acquired, the larger the profits for all concerned, except the native, who, of course, was merely harvesting the property of an absentee landlord represented on the spot by the cosmopolitan ruffian —generally, but not always, a Belgian and his retinue of black soldiers.

The Belgian Government could not be expected, and has never been required, to remove all the evils to which this conception of "government" has given rise in a year, or two years, or five years. To reorganise the native communities; restore the rightful Chiefs, or rather their successors in customary law; to remove the native upstarts put in their place—sometimes a "soldier" from a totally different tribe; to establish native councils; to cut down the army, existing for piracy and extortion; to provide a native administration; to lay the basis of an equable land settlement (in itself the work of years, and not at all a pressing one at this stage); to regulate the question of food supplies; to inculcate a new faith in the white man among these poor tortured and betrayed people;—this is a work of reconstruction, of atonement, of patience, of generosity which would take an Administration a generation at the very least. To have required the Belgian Government to perform this miracle in a few short months would have been absurd, and it is merely dishonest to represent the reasonable demand which has been made as an unreasonable demand which has not been made.

No. Neither by word of mouth, nor by the pen, has it ever been suggested that the Belgian Government can promptly remove the crop of

monstrous maladies which have sprung up under the Leopoldian System.

What the Belgian Government has been asked to do has been to *remove the cause of these evils*, to *sweep away the System itself;* and for people, outside the Belgian Cabinet, to contend that that request could not be, and cannot be complied with, is an outrage upon common-sense. The Belgian Government could have pronounced the death sentence upon the System the very day, the very hour it annexed. But it has been allowed to annex with the avowed intention of perpetuating the System.

Consider the position. The horror of this thing, the enormity of the whole conception was patent, overwhelming. The knowledge of it universal. The whole world had rung with it. For years and years its crimes had cried vengeance to Heaven. Here, in the very midst of our boasted civilisation, in the twentieth century, had uprisen a system of rule which recalled the proceedings of the Assyrian Kings, the reincarnation of principles and practices condemned by mankind in mankind's upward evolution. A vast territory in the tropics of Africa; its plains, its mountains, its rivers, its forests, its natural resources, its millions of virtually helpless human beings, claimed as the absolute property of Europeans resident thousand of miles away; theirs to exploit, theirs to pillage, theirs to pirate, theirs to enslave—for their own exclusive profit. A System of rule which dared to invoke the authority of Law in wiping out, by a single stroke of the pen, the immemorial rights of millions of human beings in the very land they dwelt in; wiping out their right to buy and to sell the produce

of their own country, their right to dispose freely of their own labour, their right to the freedom of their very movements, their rights over their very bodies! And this, to make the offence if possible even more heinous, the affront to civilisation even more colossal, in a territory solemnly surrounded with the safeguard of international comity.

Here was no new problem to examine. Here was no complex situation requiring the perambulations of a Crown Prince and a Colonial Minister. The remedy of to-day is the remedy of to-morrow; to extirpate the conception which assigns to the Congo native the part of a slave labouring for the aggrandisement of Belgium, and to Brussels the *rôle* of the modern Carthage. To give back to the native that of which he has been robbed—the right to buy and to sell in his country's produce, fruit of his labours—to invite trade and encourage commercial enterprise to enter the Congo, thus beginning the building up of a genuine customs revenue; to drop the hypocritical mask to spoliation and slavery in the talk about "vacant lands"; to replace the labour tax by a light annual poll tax, payable once a year. And, meantime, to *pay*. Yes, to pay! Do not other nations pay for the luxury of over-sea dependencies in the tropics,—pay for many years? They pay out directly to receive, in the ultimate resort, indirect returns. After a period of good government, if their administration has been able and other circumstances being equal, they cease to have to pay, and the country becomes self-supporting. Why should Belgium alone among the nations be expected to run a tropical dependency without paying? What

sort of friends are they to the Belgian people who encourage them in the belief that they can do what no other country can do? It is that advice which, if it be not rejected by the Belgians, will drive them along the path of disgrace to the abyss of moral and material ruin. And if the Belgians have more to pay than they would have had if the policy of their King had been that of a civilised administration instead of a piratical enterprise—whose fault is that? Are the natives to enter upon a further period of martyrdom because a Belgian Cabinet has played into the hands of an unscrupulous Monarch?

When M. Renkin returns from the Congo, the problem of that unhappy land will be the same as when he set out—the same as it has been since 1891. If M. Renkin spent five years or fifty years in the Congo, it would not alter the fact that to steal the natives land on paper, and to steal his property, in fact, is to reduce him to the level of a slave and to destroy him.

Human ingenuity can invent no half-way house between a system of European rule in the African tropics—where the white man cannot settle and perpetuate his race—reposing upon a claim to own the natural fruits of the soil, carrying with it as its inevitable sequel the claim to compel the aboriginal population to collect those fruits as tribute—which is Slavery; and a system of European rule reposing upon the free disposal of the fruits of the soil on the part of the aboriginal population by fair commercial dealing with the rest of the world.

How can "reforms" be built upon a basis of moral declension so profound as the *Leopoldian*

System? No self-respecting Government, no self-respecting people knowing the facts—and the Belgian people did not know the facts—would have made itself responsible for the gigantic task of administering the Congo, without breaking at once, and for ever, with a conception so monstrous and so vile.

But the Belgian governing element, which has been in power for over twenty years, had no intention of breaking with the System. It said so from the first. It has always said so. It defended the System from the earliest moment that it was challenged. It has always defended it. It has stood by that System from the beginning, because the King initiated it, the King applied it, and the King willed that it should continue.

And the shame and tragedy of the thing, for us, is this. That our Government, knowing the facts, knowing the intentions, knowing as no other Government in the world has sufficient experience to know, the appalling consequences, present and future of such a system for the native races; has not stood up and compelled its cessation, if not for humanity, if not from compassion, if not from a sense of historical responsibility; then at least in the name of common decency and statesmanship.

What in point of fact has the Belgian Government done, and what has it not done since the annexation of the Congo was voted more than twelve months ago? It has retained the System. And that really covers everything. It has endorsed the validity of the old legislation. It has renewed the so-called forced labour decrees for works of "public utility" from which the natives not only get nothing, but suffer in an intensified degree. It

has provided that the governing body of the Congo from Brussels shall be controlled by the King, in allowing him to nominate eight out of the fourteen members of the Colonial Council. It has passed a Budget founded in the main, as previous Budgets, upon the product of slave labour, the proceeds from the rubber and copal forced out of the native by its officials in the National domain, and by the agents of the *concessionnaire* companies in the concession areas. It has retained virtually the entire staff of the incriminated administration of the Congo. There are among its officials in Africa to-day men who have perpetrated or connived at the perpetration of, or ordered the perpetration of, every crime which a diseased imagination, a disreputable past, unlimited immunity in wrong-doing so long as revenue was produced, long years spent in Africa under an infernal *régime* demoralising both white and black, can combine to render possible.

Look at this Colonial Budget for 1909, the Belgian Government's first Budget, noting *en passant* that the person nominated by the Government's majority in the Senate as Vice-President and Acting-President of the Colonial Commission charged with the duty of elaborating it, was the President of the ABIR Trust! This Budget affords the most convincing proof of any which could possibly be adduced of the scandalous slavery imposed upon the Congo natives and the pillage of the Congo country which is now going on under the auspices of the Belgian Government.*

If the reader will concentrate his attention for a few moments upon the following synopsis of this document, as published by the Belgian Parliament,

* *Chambre des représentants. Annexe au No.* 15.

he will realise, as I think nothing else will make him realise to the same extent, what the "Congo System" is.

The total estimate of revenue for the current year is given at £1,443,761. The total estimate of ordinary expenditure is given at the same figure, to which must be added £336,932 extraordinary expenditure, which includes the first instalment, amounting to £152,000, of the £2,000,000 lump sum to be paid in annuities, provided for King Leopold by the terms of the Treaty of Transfer. This charge is levied upon the Congo, which means, of course, upon the wretched native.

How is this revenue of £1,443,761 made up? First of all, from what passes as "taxation," *i.e.* from the rubber, ivory and copal obtained from the natives of the "National domain," as follows :—

"National domain: taxes in kind."

"Produce of the sale of rubber: £600,000; of ivory, £51,240; of copal, £24,033."

Or a total of £675,273. Then come the dividends, interest and percentage on profits acquired by the Belgian Government from its holdings in the *concessionnaire* companies. These total to £100,000. There is a further £19,360 obtained from taxes upon natives in silver coin. In one form or another the Congo natives are, therefore, supplying the Belgian Government this year with £79,633; more than 60 per cent. of its entire revenue. A sum of £72,000 is further set down from "sales of ivory not acquired by taxation" —how acquired is left to the imagination. This ivory must obviously have been collected by the

natives before finding its way into the treasury of *Bula Matadi*. The Kilo gold mines, which the Belgian Government works with "forced" labour, *i.e.* raided labour,* are put down as producing £48,960; the product of sales from coffee and cocoa, also obtained from forced native labour, figure at £4,400. A further £40,000 is obtained from unspecified "arrangements" with the *concessionnaire* companies. Customs dues only amount to £235,840, and it is to be noted that included in this amount are the dues levied by the Belgian Government upon its own imports, which reappear on the credit side under the heads of expenditure. The other items are insignificant.

Now let us turn to the expenditure columns. These are divided into sections. Section A comprises the salaries of the civil staff and expenses connected with its up-keep (457 European units and 56 native units); the salaries, etc., of the military staff (consisting of 434 European units and 17,000 native ranks) or "Force Publique"; of the marine staff (156 European units) and the up-keep of the river flotilla; expenditure on hygiene (29 European units). This covers what is termed the Interior Department. Section B comprises the salaries of the customs and tax-collecting staff (103 European units); surveying staff (33 European units); the salaries of the agricultural staff (123 European units); salaries of the mining staff (22 European units); salaries paid

* For the manner in which labour for the Grands Lacs railway and Kilo mines is obtained, the reader may be referred to the official documents quoted in the Belgian Chamber, quoted and explained at length in the publication of the Congo magistrate Stanislas Lefranc; to the Consular reports of Vice-Consul Michell and Captain Thesiger, etc.

to the native taxpayers for precious products and food-stuffs, of which more anon. This covers what are termed the Financial, Agricultural and Mines Departments. Section C covers the Postal and Telegraphic Department, and comprises the various expenses connected with this Department (European units 26). Section D covers the Departments of "justice, religion and public instruction," and comprises salaries, police, prisons, and so on, connected with the above-named Departments (80 European units); subsidies to Roman Catholic missionaries, schools.

Section E and last is entitled "Expenses connected with the European administration." Although so labelled, these expenses figure in the ordinary expenditure of the Congo, and are, therefore, a charge upon the Colony. They comprise the following sums, for the following purposes:—

Annuity to Prince Albert until he succeeds to the Belgian Throne	£4,800
Annuity to Princess Clementine until she marries	3,000
Annuities to the former officials of the Crown domain*	2,400
Annuities to the congregation of the missionaries of Scheut	2,600
Up-keep of the tropical greenhouses and colonial collections at Laeken in Belgium	16,000
Up-keep of the Tervueren museum in Belgium	4,000

Is it not prodigious that the natives of the

* Graciously surrendered to Belgium by the King, after he had pillaged it for ten years, for £2,000,000 in annual instalments.

Congo should be required to gather rubber in the Congo forests, at the muzzle of the rifle and at the end of the lash, to supply members of the Belgian royal family with annuities,* and to provide for the upkeep of Belgian museums and botanical collections? Imagine the natives of Nigeria being expected to collect palm-oil or rubber for his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, and to provide the necessary for the maintenance, in a fit and proper state of preservation, of Kew Gardens and the anthropological department of the South Kensington Museum!

Section E also includes the annual debt charges on the loans with which the Congo has been saddled, the sums realised having been spent, in part, in all sorts of enterprises all over the world. Article I. of the Colonial Law provides that the interest on these loans shall be exclusively charged to the Colony. One recalls Burke's pregnant phrase: "Every debt for which an equivalent of some kind or other is not given, is, on the face of it, a fraud."

The Congo native is, therefore, called upon—apart altogether from satisfying the greed of the *concessionnaires* in the *concessionnaire* area (see map)—to pay the salaries of 1463 European officials whom the Belgian Government thrusts upon him; grants to the Belgian royal family, grants to Belgian museums, and the interest on loans from which he has not derived the slightest advantage. These items work out as follows:—

* It would be legitimate to add, with King Leopold's annuity also; but I have preferred to deal here only with "ordinary" expenditure. King Leopold's annuity is covered by a loan on which the Congo will find the interest.

Salaries to 1463 European officials ...	£265,964
Sums specified above under Section E ...	32,800
Other sums not specified in above list under Section E, and including the up-keep of the "Villa Colonial" in Brussels, payment to members of the Colonial Council in Brussels, publication of a magazine in Brussels, etc., etc.	32,999
Annual debt charges	236,654

Or a total of £568,417.

But do not let us suppose for a moment that this is all. The Congo native must also find the money for the passage out and home of these officials, their equipment, their stores, their furniture, and the freight and charges upon these stores sent from Europe. He must furnish the requisite for the salaries of the 17,000 native soldiers and the unnumbered thousands of paid native workmen at the Government stations, their women and hangers-on; he must find the ammunition, the guns, the cannons to be used against himself. *And he must feed this host.*

Even if we did not know that already, the official returns admit it. There is a footnote to every "chapter" of Section A which reads as follows:—

"The maintenance of the native staff of the Upper Congo being covered *by the taxes in food-stuffs furnished by the natives*, the necessary credit for the payment of these expenses is included in Article 80, "Remuneration to the natives and various expenses."

I will come to that in a moment, but, this "credit" excepted, what does the native supplier of these revenues obtain in return from the

beneficent Government which demands them of him? You can go through these expenditure returns with a magnifying glass and the only items which may conceivably be held to benefit the native are the medical expenditure ("hygiene"), which, exclusive of the salaries of the medical staff, amounts to £14,000, including the transport, freight charges, and the usual paraphernalia, and the enormous sum of £3,192 spent upon "public instruction" (schools, etc.), which, again, includes freight, expenses, and customs dues on the furniture for the "schools," the clothing for the children, etc.!

And let the reader ever bear in mind that these contributions are exacted from a people robbed of its economic power, robbed of its negotiable wealth; which is not allowed to trade or enrich itself in any form whatsoever by commerce and industry.

But, inconceivably gross as is the outrage, when examined in the light of the above statistics, its grossness is, if that be possible, accentuated still further when these statistics are examined from another standpoint.

We have seen that the Belgian Government owns to obtaining directly from the natives of the "National domain," rubber, ivory, and copal to the value of £675,273,* and from the natives of the concession area, indirectly, the further sum of £100,000. To simplify the exposition which is to follow, I will leave out of account the latter sum.

The Belgian Government also secures from the natives the whole of the food supplies for its staff, European and native (with the exception of luxuries for the former imported from Europe). Is it

* Exclusive of the "taxes" in coin.

possible to estimate the local value of that immense contribution of raw food-stuffs—the local value of the food-stuffs themselves, not the labour expended in collecting, growing, and preparing them, for that cannot be estimated? It is. After very careful inquiry I conclude that an estimate of 100,000 individuals—including soldiers, paid workmen at the Government stations, their women, children, servants, the servants of the white officials, etc.—in the Belgian Government's direct or indirect employ which the "bush" native is called upon to feed is a very low estimate.* It is also a low estimate to reckon that each unit will consume food-stuffs to the equivalent of five shillings per month. The native of the Congo upon whom falls the burden of supplying these food requirements set up by the Belgian Government, may therefore be regarded as furnishing that Government with such supplies to the annual value of £300,000. Add to this the £675,273 of precious products paid direct: and the native of the Congo is contributing in round figures £1,000,000 sterling annually to the Belgian Government *in raw produce alone.*

What does the native get in return? Article 80 of the expenditure returns informs us. This is the "credit" referred to in the passage quoted above. It is thus described—

"Value, at European prices—manufacturers' prices plus cost of packing and transport free on board at Antwerp—of *merchandise* shipped to the Congo *to be paid to the natives in exchange for the products or the labour furnished as taxation* (*à titre d'impôt*) and for various expenses such as cost of packing and manipulating the *products*—£115,000."

* An under-estimate by something like 30 per cent. probably.

So that for his million pounds sterling of raw produce, *plus the gigantic labour in obtaining and preparing it*, to say nothing of other forms of labour imposed upon him, the native of the Congo receives trade goods apparently equivalent to £115,000, but not really so, for as shown in the passage quoted, the cost of packing and manipulating the precious products (rubber, copal, ivory) which the native supplies is included in that estimate.*

This is the "Congo system."

And here, again, is the "Congo system." In the eleven years, 1898–1908, rubber, ivory, and copal have poured out of the Congo (80 per cent. rubber) amounting in value to £21,049,590; and in that period the *total* imports into the Congo—*i.e.* including everything needed for the upkeep of the Administration and the *concessionnaires*, viz. stores, armament, coal, railway material, etc.—amounted to £9,955,154, of which it is safe to say that the native producers of the twenty-one million pounds sterling of raw produce did not receive 10 per cent.

And here, once more, is the character of the "Congo system" exemplified in the returns of military expenditure at which we have already glanced without separately dissecting them. The Congo army consists, as already stated, of four

* To this sum of £115,000 the expenditure returns add the cost of transport of these goods to the Congo and in the Congo; the cost of transport of the rubber, etc., supplied by the natives, freight and insurance on these goods, and on the rubber, etc.; and the Customs duties—with which the Belgian Government debits itself, a book entry merely—on these imported goods and the exported produce. The returns do not separate the transport expenses and Customs dues on the goods from the transport expenses, and Customs dues on the exported products—the object being obvious.

hundred and thirty-four European officers and non-commissioned officers, and of 17,000 native units. The total expenses set down in the estimates for the up-keep of this Force is only £255,264, including pay, equipment, ammunition, etc. Incredible as these figures seem, they are even more amazing than would appear at first sight. For, comprised in the total, are substantial sums which would not figure in any British returns of a similar kind. An item of £12,000 for steamship passages out and home and the railway expenses from Brussels to Antwerp (the port of embarkation) for the European staff; £6000 for freight and insurance on the shipment of arms, ammunition, accoutrement, merchandise with which to pay the native troops, etc.; £11,000 for import duties on these articles—a book entry and nothing more; £35,000 for transport expenses on these articles in the Congo; £10,000 exclusively spent upon the armament of the Fort, below Boma.

The salaries paid to the four hundred and thirty-four members of the European military staff amount to £60,360.

The salaries paid to the 17,000 *native ranks amount to* £44,492, *of which* £37,000 *in trade goods.*

Just think what this means! The average pay of a native private in British West Africa is one shilling a day and threepence for rations. The average is, I believe, a little higher in German East Africa. For example, if Southern Nigeria possessed a military force of 17,000 native ranks, the salaries would work out at—

Salaries 1*s.* *per diem*, say in round figures £18 *per annum* per unit, £306,000.

Subsistence money 3*d.* per diem, say £4.

11*s.* 3*d.* per annum per unit, £77,562. A total of £383,562.

On the Congo, the Belgians pay their 17,000 native units a nominal total of £44,492 in the shape of salaries and, in lieu of subsistence money, compel the natives to feed them, their women and their camp followers.*

What clearer proof could you have that unlimited opportunity for loot and rape is the attraction for the Congo soldier, and the only hold the Belgians have upon him? What clearer evidence that the Belgian army on the Congo is nothing but a great predatory horde used for the purpose of breaking and terrorising the natives into acquiescing in the enslavement of their persons and the systematic pillage of their country?

The public has been sickened enough with stories of specific horrors committed on the Congo. I have done my share in exposing them. But what are atrocities perpetrated upon individuals, compared with that fundamental atrocity which Belgium is perpetuating to-day in Central Africa, the murder of a whole race physically, morally, mentally, spiritually? There are no specific atrocities in the last Consular reports issued by the Foreign Office. There is no mention of soldiers returning with baskets full of human hands to show that they had thoroughly and in due form punished a village slow in gathering rubber. The need for that sort of thing has passed. But I

* The returns of the Southern Nigeria Regiment on December 31, 1907, show a total strength of 1936, consisting of 95 British officers and non-commissioned officers, and 1841 native ranks. The total expenditure for the year is £101,225 13*s.* 3*d.*, within £3000 of the expenditure of the Belgian Government for 434 officers and non-commissioned officers and 17,000 native ranks!

venture to assert that nothing more terrible, nothing more heart-rending and heart-sickening in the old reports will be found than in the picture drawn for the Government of His Britannic Majesty, of the daily life of that once magnificent people, the Bakubas of the Kasai, by Captain the Hon. Wilfrid Thesiger the British Consul in the Congo.*

When the Foreign Office, in its last published despatch to the Belgian Government, allows that a state of affairs "indistinguishable from slavery" continues to prevail, we need no assurance from missionaries that the conditions are "worse to-day than at any time during the last twelve years."† But we do not require the admissions of the Foreign Office, nor the reports of the Consular staff, nor the reports of the missionaries.

The system remains *et tout est dit.*

And it will remain, disguised, perhaps, under some new and subtle title, unless the British and American peoples determine otherwise.

The Belgian King and his Colonial Minister have once again taken the trouble to place the matter beyond doubt; the King in the course of a public speech at Antwerp which will be found in the Appendix.

The only paragraphs of M. Renkin's speech which deserve immortality are the following:—

"By the annexation of the Congo, Belgium has assumed the duty of continuing and developing the glorious work accomplished here by the genial initiative and admirable perseverance of the King and by the energy of the Belgians. . . . It is upon Belgium that

* See Chapter IX.

† Rev. H. M. Whitside, Letter from Congo Reform Association to Foreign Office, May 25, 1909.

devolves henceforth the realisation of these great designs under the enlightened control of the King who conceived and pursued them amidst difficulties and contradictions."

Yes, the System will remain while "the languishing chimeras of fraudulent reformation," to quote Burke once more, are displayed for the edification of the Foreign Office. The pillage of the Congo Basin will continue, and in time that vast area of the world's surface, with the exception of the highlands of Katanga, will become an uninhabited wilderness unless . . . .

My colleagues and I have done our utmost. We have given of our best. We have appealed to Governments and to Statesmen.

It is only left for us to appeal to that Public Opinion which creates Governments and invests Statesmen with executive authority.

PART IV

AT THE BACK OF BEYOND

CHAPTER XVI

THE GERMAN BOGEY

"The undersigned German Missionary Societies and Associations for the betterment of the natives and for the advancement of Colonial interests, send to the Congo Reform Association on the occasion of its third anniversary, their best wishes, and confidently rely that its efforts to secure the legitimate rights of the natives, and to bring about a better state of affairs on the Congo, will be successful."—Telegram received April 1907, by the Author, signed by the Evangelical African Society of Berlin, the Evangelical Society of German East Africa, the Basel Mission, the Moravian Brotherhood, the North German Missionary Society, the German Baptist Missionary Society, the Berlin Society for the furtherance of Evangelical Missions, the Lutheran Missionary Society of Leipsic, the Colonial and Foreign Missionary Society, the Nachtigal African Research Society, the Rheinische Missionary Society.

"The undersigned German Chambers of Commerce send to the Congo Reform Association their best wishes, with their hopes that its inspiring efforts to secure the establishment of legitimate commerce, thus simultaneously benefiting the condition of the native peoples, may be crowned with further successes."—Telegram received April 1907, by the Author, signed by the Chambers of Commerce of Bremen, Elbefeld, Karlsruhe and Baden, Leipsic and Stratsund.

"We send best wishes for a further success of your activity in the interests of the natives and of the full development of commerce."—Telegram received April 1906, by the Author, from the Union of West African Merchants of Hamburg.

"May your work soon be crowned with complete success by the administration in the Congo being brought into accordance with the articles of the Berlin and Brussels Congo Acts, hitherto treated with sovereign contempt."—Extract from despatch, received in April 1907, by the Author, from the German members of the Congo Reform Association.

EVEN to the casual observer, and to the casual observer strongly prejudiced in favour of the wisdom of the Foreign Office under its present

management, British policy in regard to the Congo seems to have been peculiarly lacking in clearness of vision and decisiveness. One finds that impression very widely prevalent. So much so that the average man who is not closely acquainted with the subject, is led to believe that some grave danger lurks in the background accountable for much that appears mysterious in the conduct of those responsible for British foreign policy. There is a grave danger, but it is not, I submit, of the kind supposed.

On May 27th last, speaking in the House of Commons, Sir Edward Grey played up to this not unnatural belief—if one may be permitted so unliterary an expression. He said—

"If this question (the Congo question) were rashly handled it might make a European question, compared to which those which we have had to deal with in the last few months might be child's play."

Sir Edward Grey has since explained that this statement was intended as a reply to Mr. Bennett, who, in the course of the same debate, had revived the proposal first mooted by Lord Fitzmaurice in 1904, and raised once more by Sir George White in 1908, viz. that, failing compliance with our demands, we should stop King Leopold's rubber slave-ships from leaving the Congo, or seize material guarantees (as Mr. Gladstone, with Lord Salisbury's concurrence, was prepared to do in the case of Smyrna) in the shape of the Custom House at Boma. But the speech remains. Whatever its intention may have been, its effect was to frighten a good many people with the spectre of war arising out of action by Great Britain against the Congo.

The speech forces those who conscientiously believe that England's honour is involved in this matter and that her prestige will be impaired if she finally retires beaten from the field, or—what would be tantamount—if she agrees to compromise upon essentials, to examine what may lie behind the truculence of King Leopold and his Ministers.

In parenthesis, let it be said, the word "rashly" may be dismissed at once; in the light of the events of the past six years, no one in his senses would attribute "rashness" to the Foreign Office in this connection — the supposition is even humorous, grimly humorous.

Translated into commonplace language, Sir Edward Grey's declaration would read: "If you press me to take effective action it means a European war": and that was, undoubtedly, the impression it produced.

Very well. But war with whom?

The signatory Powers of the Berlin Act were Germany, Austro-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, France, England, Italy, Holland, Portugal, Russia, Sweden and Norway, and Turkey. From this possible list of foemen, Denmark, Spain, Italy, Holland, Portugal, Russia, Sweden and Norway, and Turkey will be eliminated by common consent. Germany, Austro-Hungary, Belgium, and France are left.

We have an understanding with France, and the idea of France going to war with us about the Congo will not bear inspection. If Belgium declared war upon us, it would, to be sure, be serious for the Antwerp stock-exchange. The capacity or the desire of the Emperor Francis Joseph to strike at England on behalf of a brother

monarch, whom he cordially detests and towards whom he has exhibited an open contempt, will hardly appeal to the imagination.

There remains Germany, and Sir Edward Grey's speech, especially under the circumstances of the moment, meant Germany . . . or meant nothing.

Let us recall Sir Edward Grey's speech on the Congo in 1904 :—

". . . We must run the risk of exciting jealousy and suspicion; indeed he expected we had excited some already by the steps that had been taken. But a matter of that kind cut both ways; it was true it made it difficult to take separate steps, but on the other hand, whatever step we had to take was likely to lead other Powers to take steps also."

The position, it will be suggested, has changed since 1904. Germany, declare many Englishmen, is deliberately, and for sinister motives, challenging our supremacy on the sea; she designs our invasion and the seizure of our Colonies. England, declare many Germans, is surrounding us with a ring fence of alliances and understandings which are aimed at our security; she is jealous of our industrial expansion and seeks to cripple us—we must increase our fleet in self-defence. Yes, the position has changed in this regard, but so has the whole field of our foreign outlook, and if the change does not mark an improvement in the situation, so far as British prestige in the councils of the world is concerned, then our diplomacy has not been as successful as the public generally believe it to have been.

What is our position to-day as it is generally understood by the citizen of the Empire? We

have drawn nearer to our great self-governing Colonies. We are on excellent terms with the United States. We are the allies of Japan, which has enabled us to withdraw a portion of the Pacific squadron into European waters. We have an *entente cordiale* with France, an understanding with Russia, and one with Spain. We entertain very friendly feelings towards Italy. We have friendships cemented by dynastic ties with Denmark and Norway. If this combination of elements spells strength we have seldom been stronger than we are to-day. So much for that.

Let us now proceed to analyse this alleged German danger in so far as the Congo problem is affected thereby. First of all, as to the interests which Germany might conceivably have in standing out as a champion of slavery on the Congo against Britain and, probably, against the United States. By universal admission the Germans are a singularly intelligent people. Is it likely, judged by any common-sense standard, that they would place themselves in so unintelligent a position? The Bismarckian tradition left no room for sentiment, it is true. But assuming the Bismarckian tradition still supreme, although in less able hands, as many believe it to be, there are limits even to its capacity to ride rough shod over actualities; and for Germany to come forward as the defender of slavery and monopoly on the Congo (from which, be it noted, Germany derives no benefit, while, on the other hand, certain British capitalistic interests have derived benefit), when at Berlin itself was held the Conference which, in Bismarck's words at the opening sitting, was "to associate the natives of Africa with civilisation by opening the interior

of the continent to trade," would be too great a violation of logic, unless an overwhelming national interest were at stake.

Where is such an interest to be sought? What is the primary essentiality of German national growth? Industrial expansion, necessitating free markets. Germany will fight for free markets as England used to do, and Germany will be right. She will view with anxiety and anger all attempts to secure fresh territory by a Power like France, which seeks to convert every part of the habitable globe over which flies her flag, into a privileged preserve for French *concessionnaires* and financiers; as France hoped to deal with the whole Congo Basin in 1882 and 1883. And Germany will be embittered against England to the extent to which she imagines England is assisting France in her exclusive economic policy. Such an attitude should be all the more comprehensible to Englishmen since Englishmen have for generations fought and bled for the very same principle.

Now, what has Germany to fear from English action so far as the Congo is concerned in regard to this problem? If our policy is a straightforward one, obviously nothing. The Congo could become a great feeding ground for legitimate German trade expansion which, in the natural course of events, would follow from the suppression of the Leopoldian System. That German merchants would be quick to take advantage of it can only be doubted by those who are ignorant of the wonderful strides which German trade, owing to the ability and energy of German merchants, is making throughout tropical Africa wherever free markets exist; for example, in Nigeria, the Gold

Coast, Uganda. The idea that Germany, which, as I have previously explained, has suffered from the monopolistic Belgian *régime*,* would take active steps to help King Leopold in keeping German trade out of the Congo, must appear grotesque to any thoughtful person, with or without a special knowledge of the general circumstances.

But has the British official policy towards the Congo always been a straightforward one? Has it always been such as to command the confidence of foreign Governments, and of the German Government in particular? We must ask ourselves this question, because we are here discussing the suggestion, a suggestion publicly conveyed, and assuredly entertained by the public as a result of that suggestion that Germany stands in the way of Congo reform, and because, were an understanding arrived at between England and Germany, no man can doubt that an international Conference would be speedily forthcoming. These matters should, therefore, be approached with candour, for the issue at stake is the lives of many human beings, and I cannot admit that any other considerations should be allowed to weigh in the balance.

The vast majority of Englishmen are profoundly convinced that compared with that of Continental Powers, the diplomacy of this country is direct and unambiguous. In a general way, that view is probably well founded, notwithstanding

* Only the other day Consul Vohsen, editor of the *Kolonial Rundschau*, who has fought a gallant fight in Germany against the Congo slave-system, enumerated a long list of arbitrary treatment of German subjects by the Congo authorities.

the reputation for "perfidiousness" we enjoy on the Continent, which the intelligent and well-disposed foreigner crystallises in the statement one so often meets with, viz. that while the word of the individual Englishman is to be trusted above that of the citizen of any other country, the foreign policy of England is not.

It must be, then, that in this matter of the Congo, British diplomacy offers an exception to the rule, for there is no gainsaying that it has been both inconsistent and tortuous. In 1894 the Liberal Government of the day sought, at the suggestion of Mr. Cecil Rhodes, to use the Congo State for the purpose of gaining Imperial advantages at the expense of Germany and France,* thus itself violating, for political or Imperial ends, the Congo State's neutrality, which neutrality the Liberal Government of to-day invokes as an obstacle to British action against the Congo's rulers.

Let us note, in passing, the singular contrast between that time and this, as a side-light upon so-called "democratic government." Fifteen years ago, a British Cabinet—the British electors who placed it in power being kept in entire ignorance until the deed was done—plunges into a diplomatic intrigue with Leopold II.; an intrigue so badly

* France was meditating at the time her descent into the Nile valley. But of all the attempts to stop her, this was about the worst which could possibly have been devised. The provocation to Germany was gratuitous. It was also deliberate, because the Foreign Office had warning that Germany would oppose the interposition of a strip of British territory between German East Africa and the Congo State, as, of course, she was entitled to do on the ground that the Congo State being neutral, it had no right to lease a portion of its territory to one Power, for purposes which another Power might regard as inimical to its interests.

engineered, so little thought-out, so ill-conceived, that it involved this country at once in rebuff, in humiliating exposure, and in friction with two great Powers. To-day there is a national demand for decision and firmness in British diplomatic handling of the Congo outrage, and the successors of the men who manœuvred so awkwardly in 1894, throw up their hands and talk about European complications, about irresponsible advisers, about reformers whose political horizon is confined to one subject in which they happen to be interested, and who, consequently, are blind to everything else. The picture is presented to us of anxious Ministers, holding innumerable and mysterious strings of the greatest delicacy; of a Government department harassed, but steeped in wisdom, searching with sagacious eye the bye-ways of world politics, bending a penetrating gaze upon the mystic recesses of dark intrigue, moving only when assured of absolute success, loftily indifferent in the profundity and all-embracing sweep of its trained outlook, to these rash and clamorous voices from outside, beyond the pale of official sapiency. It is a hardy perennial, this picture, unfolded to the awed gaze of the academy of the nation. But from the official sanctum, wherein is concentrated all the abilities, there was produced, in secret, in the year 1894, a diplomatic instrument so fatuous that all attempt to defend its still-born provisions has long since been abandoned.

The Anglo-Congolese Convention of 1894 showed the statesmen of Germany that a British Liberal Government was prepared to enter into a collusive shuffle with the sovereign of the Congo State — of all men in the world — to

improve the Imperial position of Britain in Central Africa.

The attitude of the Unionist Government in 1895 over the Stokes case was hardly calculated to lessen German suspicion of the Foreign Office. It is notorious—the White Book of August, 1896, proves it—that Germany at that time was desirous of joining hands with England in curbing the monster to which both had been instrumental in giving birth. The German Chancellor was of opinion, reported Sir E. Malet to the Marquis of Salisbury, that "it was high time these high-handed proceedings of the Congo Government should be taken *au sérieux*. . . . Germany would not allow this scheme to be continued . . . only a short time back an armed force had crossed the German frontier, and violated German territory, and such acts as this, and Mr. Stokes' death, could no longer be tolerated . . . it was high time that the autocratic Government, of what should be a neutral State, learnt the limits within which its actions must for the future be confined."

But Lord Salisbury, contrary, I have been told on good authority, to his own personal inclinations, would not move. The murdered Stokes was allowed to lie unavenged in his grave. Germany's overtures—repeated again at a later date—were not accepted. What tens of thousands of lives would have been spared, if King Leopold had been brought to his knees, then! The Foreign Office had taken Leopold africanus under its wing, and the Foreign Office would have kept him there, but for steadily increasing pressure from that misguided, ill-informed force, which is called Public Opinion, and which permanent officialdom detests

and despises, perhaps because the former's information is sometimes more accurate and its instincts sounder.

And if, after these experiences, the German Government of to-day, while, we may assume, accurately informed as to the character of the British national movement, is suspicious lest the Foreign Office may have some obscure ends in view—well, we may be righteously indignant, we may be convinced that this suspicion is unjust, that times are changed. But can we honestly affect surprise and logically feel resentment, or believe without positive proof that Germany has determined to defend the Belgian system of monopoly, privilege and slavery against Britain?

The Foreign Office repudiates with warmth any suggestion that considerations affecting the progress of the Cape to Cairo railway, the British financial interests in the Katanga mines, or the grave question of frontier rectification which has recently arisen, affect in the slightest degree its handling of the Congo problem. But why should Germany be thought Machiavellian, if in the face of past experience, she asks herself how this British railway, now rapidly approaching the Congo frontier, is to effect its junction with the northern line unless it passes through Congo territory, and what is to be the price of that advantage? Why should Germany be credited with nefarious designs if she wonders what the precise character of this British financial interest in the Katanga may be, if it is merely money-making or whether there is something else behind? Why should it be insinuated that Germany is the stumbling-block if she draws in her horns upon noting the altered attitude

of the Foreign Office in relation to the so-called right of pre-emption over the Congo, secured for France as the bargain which sealed French adhesion to the Berlin Act, through the instrumentality of Jules Ferry, behind the back of the Powers, by a piece of political trickery? German diplomacy is probably quite aware of the secret proposals for a partition of the Congo (in which France was to have the lion's share) hatched at the French Foreign Office in 1907, on the ground that Belgian neutrality was incompatible with the acquisition by that Power of a vast dependency in Africa. Should we be justified in this country in affecting undue surprise at the reticence displayed by official Germany in this Congo matter?

It is perfectly true that the German Government could, had it so desired, by raising a little finger, have encouraged a movement in Germany in favour of the emancipation of the Congo races and the restoration of freedom of commerce. The machinery for that sort of thing which does not exist with us, is, in Germany, recognised and perfected. It is certain that the German Government has not done so. On the other hand, it is equally true that the attacks upon England and the reformers which have appeared in certain German journals, utilised at one time by the Press Bureau, have been neither more malignant nor more inept than similar outbursts on the part of a similar sort of purchasable journalist in the Parisian Press.

It may be said, Germany would put aside all the considerations here advanced in favour of her co-operation in the Congo question, if the interests of her general European policy necessitated it. Has she not designs upon Belgium?

Would not a rupture between England and Belgium facilitate those designs? Here again let us approach the subject in a spirit of common-sense. If Germany entertains these ambitions, she can only make them good by running the risk of war. France would certainly object to their realisation. England probably would, because of her understanding with France. Possibly on the merits. Although, from that point of view, British sentiment would seem to be undergoing a decisive modification. What appeared necessary in 1870, is beginning to appear less vital in 1909. Belgian ingratitude is affecting even an unemotional people. The remarks of Sir William Angus, President of the National Liberal Federation, at the opening session of that organisation this year, are significant of the change which is passing over public opinion :—

"They heard more continually than they used to do," Sir William Angus is reported to have said, "the query of whether it was wise of the Government to guarantee the independence of Belgium when that guarantee was used by her to flout herself in the face of Europe and to disgrace humanity."

The extraordinary insolence of the Belgian Press, its threats and hectorings during the last five years; the contemptuous tone of the Belgian despatches; the organised and systematic literary propaganda of abuse in three languages spread over the whole Continent by the Press Bureau, abuse of English Colonial policy and of British public men —these things have begun to sink into the English nation.

But Belgium is still a neutral Power, and Germany could take action against her, without

risking war, only under an affront to her national dignity and interests. How remarkable it is that people who use the argument of German world-designs fail to see that it is a double-edged sword which cuts deeply into their own fingers. They are, apparently, incapable of realising that the existence of the Leopoldian System on the Congo under the Belgian flag, a System which violates the Berlin Act and the German-Congolese convention, shutting out German trade, gives a permanent opening for Germany, if and when it suits her, to demand instant redress from Belgium. In that demand Germany would have right on her side. Let but the German Foreign Office drop a hint to the German Chambers of Commerce which have protested against the illegal Belgian monopoly on the Congo; to the Hamburg and Bremen merchants who have suffered from its enforcement, and to the German Colonial Society which has sent petition after petition to the Reichstag on the point, that the moment is opportune to raise the issue of German commercial rights on the Congo; and a financially powerful trading expedition proceeds thither, as it has a perfect right to do, entering either from the west, or through German territory from the east. Its pioneers are met with the bland declaration that they cannot purchase rubber or copal from the natives, because those articles are the property of the "National domain" of Belgium, or the raw elements of exclusive exploitation belonging to a Belgian syndicate, as the case may be. And then what happens! So long as the Leopoldian System is maintained by Belgium, so long does Germany hold a sword of Damocles suspended

over Belgium's head. She has already an overwhelming case against the Congo, whenever she chooses to make use of it. To affect ignorance of these things is to show an astonishing flabbiness of thought and a persistent predilection for mere parrot cries. The danger from this standpoint lies, not in our diplomacy being strong, but in weakly allowing—if, indeed, it be to our interest to keep the Belgians out of mischief—a neutral Belgium to run a huge slave-farm in Central Africa, to break the moral law and the laws of nations, and to tear up international treaties.

Equal perspicuity is displayed in the alarmist contemplation of the reverse side of the picture. We are bidden to the touching sight of "Belgium throwing herself into the arms of Germany" as the result of the Congo agitation in England: the stock-in-trade "shocker" of the Press Bureau these many years past. This ingenious argument reveals an abysmal ignorance of Belgium. The Belgians would never voluntarily sign away their independence to Germany or any other Power, and if King Leopold attempted, behind the back of his people, to negotiate the death-warrant of their country's international entity, he would be driven from the throne in twenty-four hours.

And, now, as to the war issue between ourselves and Germany. Taking the matter at its worst, assuming for the sake of argument that none of the considerations I have advanced are germane, let us bear in mind that even those who believe most firmly in Germany's determination to pick a quarrel with us, who declare that war between England and Germany is, sooner or later, "inevitable"—that even these persons allow

that Germany cannot go to war with us at this moment, and cannot hope to be in a position to face the risk for fully three years. And remembering that, let us ask ourselves first this question: Is this a true prophecy that a war is "inevitable"? If we decide in the affirmative, let us ask ourselves this further question: Is it better that the "inevitable" war should come now when, in the opinion of the leading alarmists, we are overwhelmingly superior on the sea, in a cause in which our honour is involved, which appeals to the best instincts of the nation and which has evoked in our favour a host of foreign sympathies; or later when, in the opinion of the alarmists, our preponderating sea-power will have been seriously compromised? If we answer the first part of the question in the affirmative, what is the logical conclusion? That if there are risks to be apprehended from Germany, we had better run those risks now, in a good cause, rather than later in a cause which may not be so good.

And in a last resort, this final question. Are we really impotent—must we be content to remain tied hands and feet, must we do violence to our convictions, swallow the insults of King Leopold and his Ministers, be perpetually fettered in our liberty of action because on the features of Germania there rests a frown? Surely that is asking too much of a self-respecting people.

I write these words, not only as no anti-German, but as one who would fain hope for a *rapprochement* between the two countries, and as a believer that the explanation of Germany's increased naval armaments may quite as rationally be sought in her own altered position

in the world, in the dangers which her statesmen may think they see ahead of them; as in hostile designs against this country. We may think here that German policy has not been a stranger to the change which has come over the international situation. But of the change itself, and its effects, there can surely be no doubt. England now hugs to her bosom Germany's racial enemy, the Slav, whom a little while ago she likened unto the devil.* Upon England's shoulder perches Germany's traditional foe, the Gallic cock whom she bade not long since mend its manners † and scratch in the sands of the Sahara.‡ These are notable changes.

There is no excuse for the German Government's apathy in regard to the claims of humanity on the Congo. But the German Government is not singular in that respect, and certainly our Government has little right to cast moral stones. On that ground the British Government has done very little, and what it has done, has been from pressure from without. Of its own initiative the Foreign Office has done *nothing*. I have been told on frequent occasions by Continental politicians and journalists that it was all very well for me to talk about a spontaneous agitation, but a little hard for them to believe that the Foreign Office did not loom in the background. This opinion is firmly rooted in many quarters in Germany. What a satire upon the facts! Until Parliament and the country demanded it, the Foreign Office did not move a little finger, and I do not know which of the two has been the hardest, the open public fight against Leopold and his myrmidons, or the silent struggle with official

* Mr. Chamberlain. † Mr. Chamberlain. ‡ Lord Salisbury.

apathy at home—silent so far as the world is concerned.

In the early days of our struggles, when we stood alone, a mere handful, poor in this world's goods, weak in everything but doggedness, the butt of furious personal attack, the Foreign Office turned to us a frowning and unsympathetic countenance. We were a nuisance: we troubled the serenity of its composure, the sacredness of its invincible calm. We impudently questioned the righteousness and the wisdom of its monumental torpidity in the face of the national sponsorship for an enterprise which had degenerated into a great slave machine making innumerable victims.

Ah! those days, and the incessant struggling and wrestling which have succeeded them—their recollection induces a certain hesitancy among those that know, in singling out the British Government as the retainer of a monopoly of virtue in this matter among the Governments of Christendom.

Sir Edward Grey has several times complained that although he has openly expressed his willingness to co-operate with other Powers, no other Power has taken advantage of the offer. But in view of the past record of the Foreign Office in this affair, how is it possible to suppose that co-operation can be secured merely by waiting for it? It was not the Foreign Office which secured American co-operation, but the two Congo Reform Associations, of America and of England, working hand in hand. The Foreign Office did not believe that the American Government would move at all in the matter. Nothing but a determination to succeed, and an equally firm intention to act if earnest effort on the part of our diplomacy should ultimately fail,

will extend and widen international co-operation, the first step in which has been secured by forces operating outside the orbit of officialdom.

It is the duty of statesmen to lead, not to wait for a lead. We seem to be perpetually on the look-out for "leads" and "mandates" these days.

I submit that the implication in Sir Edward Grey's speech, to the effect that if British diplomacy ceases its useless flow of words, and passes to deeds in respect to the Congo scandal, this country will be involved in a war beside of which an explosion over the Austrian annexation of Bosnia—which would have engulfed in a common whirlpool Germany, Austria, Russia, England, France, Turkey, and probably Italy, and let loose three million fighting men—would be "child's play," will not stand the test of a common-sense examination of the situation.

Such being the case, I ask again why this implication was conveyed to the public mind? What was its motive—if there was a motive?

Is there some other cause at work responsible for the dry-rot in British diplomacy over the Congo?

Does the tortuous labyrinth of the "higher policy" conceal, after all, some tangible obstacle to the emancipation of the races of the Congo from the thraldom of an extirpating slavery? If so, to what particular labyrinth shall we direct our researches?

CHAPTER XVII

THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT AND THE FRENCH CONGO

ELEVEN years ago, King Leopold succeeded in carrying through, thanks to what M. Félicien Challaye * has termed "scandalous financial and political intrigues, bribery, cowardice and corruption"—to which I would add ignorance—the most successful *coup* he ever engineered in the course of his attempt to give the permanency of the *chose jugée* to his slave-system in Central Africa. He succeeded in inducing the French Government to adopt in the French Congo, the French dependency of 600,000 square miles contiguous in part to his own African borders, the same principles and the same fundamental policy that he had inaugurated in the Congo State—the policy which converts, by decrees signed in Europe, the raw produce of the soil of tropical Africa, which is the sole actual and potential wealth of the African in his economic relationship with the European, into the *property* of European monopolists. In so doing

* Member of the de Brazza Mission of investigation to the French Congo, President of *La Ligue française pour la protection des indigènes du Bassin Conventionnel du Congo*; member of the Central Committee of the *Ligue des droits de l'homme*; author of *Le Congo français*; *L'Indo-Chine française*; *Au Japon et en extrême Orient*; etc. See Appendix.

he made a great Power his accomplice and his imitator; bound that Power to him by chains of self-interest. Into the history of this discreditable *marchandage* I do not propose to enter here. It has been partially revealed, and for the rest I would refer the reader, if he desires to study the French Congo affair, to the list of publications given in the appendix. Suffice it to say that the whole of the French Congo was eventually parcelled out—just as you or I might cut up a piece of paper—among some forty *concessionnaire* companies, upon which were conferred the "right of possession," and exploitation of the soil.* In other words, ownership of the products of the country having commercial value on the European markets became vested in these forty odd financial associations; and the status of the native from that of an actual trader with the European for these products—where European trade was established—and from that of a potential trader with the European for these products—where European trade had not yet penetrated—became that of a labourer in theory, and a slave in practice, required to collect the fruits of the soil at the bidding of the agents of the absentee European owners.

The first effect of this proceeding was, as in the Congo State, to convert the European merchants already established in certain parts of the country and paying customs dues and licenses to the local Administration upon their trade, into receivers of stolen goods, and to convert the natives into poachers upon the property of the *concessionnaires*. As the natural produce of the

* See Map.

country, rubber included, of course, had been made over to the *concessionnaires* by a decree of the French Government, so, naturally, that produce belonged to them, and the native who gathered it and *sold* it to the merchant firms who had long years before settled in his country and done business with him, was a scoundrel of a dye only less deep than the merchant who *bought* that produce from him. The existing trade of the French Congo was, at that time, largely in British hands—honourable firms of reputation and standing—as it had been since the seventeenth century, and their representatives had greatly assisted the French Administration in exploring the country and had contributed large sums in customs dues to the local exchequer —£112,000 in the seven years ending 1899. The infamous treatment of these British firms by the French Government and the *concessionnaires* I have related at some length elsewhere,* and I will not go into it again. The Foreign Office chose to regard the whole matter in the light of a "private dispute," being desirous of negotiating the *entente*, whereas it was not a private dispute at all but the raising, in a concrete issue, of the same great principle of the right of the native of tropical Africa to trade in the produce of his soil with which the Foreign Office has been engaged since 1903. British interests, not merely the interests of these particular firms,—that was a passing interest—but the interests of future British trade in a territory of 600,000 square miles of internationally-free-commercial land, were sacrificed to the *entente*,

* *The British Case in French Congo* (Heinemann). See Appendix.

just as British trade interests in Madagascar and British philanthropic interests in the same island have been thrown away. Indeed when we contemplate the action of the French Government in its relation to British interests in French Congo, Madagascar, Abyssinia and the New Hebrides, the *entente* seems a quaint sort of instrument.

But all this is by the way. It was necessary just to touch upon the break-up of British trade in the French Congo following the inauguration of the concessions *régime*, because the liberties of the natives of tropical Africa are so inseparably related to the security of international commerce.

The fatal act of the French Government was bound to lead to the same consequences as regards native life, as in the Congo State. We shall see this in a moment. That the consequences, terrible as they are, have lacked the comprehensive and systematised character they acquired in the Congo State has been due to several reasons. First to the fact that the French Government has not set aside a vast portion of the territory as a "National domain" to be exploited directly, as in the Congo State, by Government officials. It stopped short of that, but exacts in royalties from the *concessionnaires* a quota of their profits which is paid into the local Administration, thus placing the local Administration in the position of a party interested in helping the *concessionnaires* to reap large profits. The System in the French Congo is not, then, as it is in the Congo State, worked directly by the Administration, but indirectly. Its application is not entrusted to French officials and officers, but is left to the *concessionnaires*. The other reason arises from the first. Over the

System in the Congo State has presided the evil genius of a supremely able organiser; one directing will, inflexible in the pursuit of its aims, its possessor himself guiding and regulating through a score of trained officials, a machine which, in time, has become perfected to its end in every wheel and rivet. In the French Congo the whole conception is looser, marked in its enforcement by irresolution and temporisation, unsettled by incompetence and leakage, maintained with increasing half-heartedness and discomfort from home. On the one side of the great African river wrong-doing, elevated into a science, run for definite purposes, sparing no effort to achieve them; calculated, implacable, relentless. On the other, wrong-doing, conceived in ignorance and intrigue, repented of long ago,* but still flourishing (and fatally increasing) through lack of moral courage in French official circles, and owing to the power of the ring of Franco-Belgian financiers at the back of the System in both Congos.

If I may be permitted an egotistical remark or two at this point, I would beg leave to say that no one can rightfully accuse me of *parti-pris* in this matter of the French Congo. No man living has rendered higher tribute to French action in the French West African possessions proper—which, thanks to Governor-General Ballay and M. Bohn, the Leopoldian System was not permitted to enter, although various attempts were made by King Leopold and his Paris friends to secure its introduction. Ballay would have none of it. "It means," he said bluntly, "that you must place a soldier

* See, for example, the Reports of M. Dubief and M. Messimy on the French Colonial Budgets. Appendix.

behind every producer." As a proof of my contention I would mention that I have the honour of being joint President with M. Pierre Mille* of the International Committee for the defence of the natives of the Conventional basin in the Congo, and there breathes not a more patriotic Frenchman than that brilliant man of letters; that my book, "Affairs of West Africa," largely concerned with French rule in West Africa, was considered interesting enough to be translated into French by M. Duchêne, head of the African department of the French Colonial Office, and, after appearing in serial form in the journal of that office, was subsequently published in book form. That I was privileged to be received this year in audience by the late French Prime Minister, M. Clemenceau, and the Colonial Minister, M. Milliès Lacroix, and to be entertained by a number of prominent personalities in the political and colonial world of Paris.† Yet no one has denounced more strongly than I have, for the past seven years, the misdeeds of the French Congo, and nobody now attempts to deny the accuracy of my charges, which de Brazza found to be true both in substance and in fact. And I would infinitely have preferred to have let the French Congo alone at this particular juncture. The recent attitude of the Foreign Office has, however, made this impossible.

The British nation was not responsible for the creation of the French Congo. The British nation

* *Chevalier* of the Legion of Honour; gold-medallist for his services as Commissioner of the Ivory Coast exhibition; war correspondent of *Le Temps* in the Græco-Turkish war, and in the Madagascar campaign; travels in West Africa, the Congo, Indo-China, etc.; author of *La vaste terre*, *Le Congo léopoldien*, etc., etc.

† *Times*, February 27, 1909.

was not called upon to recognise the flag of the French Government as the "flag of a friendly State." Our national responsibilities are not directly involved in what is taking place in the French Congo. But if the weight of French diplomacy, through the existence of the *entente cordiale*, is being exercised upon the Foreign Office with a view to blocking the national movement against the misrule of the Congo State for which we have direct national responsibility, then the conditions in the French Congo become a vital issue for us, and the public is entitled to know the truth. Moreover this scandal will not down, and it is better, perhaps, that the truth should be told, not by an enemy of the *entente*, but by a partisan of the *entente*, provided that the *entente* is what the average citizen of this Empire believes it to be, viz. a friendly bond which has eliminated old and deep-rooted misunderstandings; and not an arrangement with secret clauses, a sort of military convention, which necessitates on our part a state of perennial antagonism and suspicion in our relations with another great Power, and a one-sided bargain which requires an abandonment on our part of national obligations, a surrender of national interests and the incurring of national liabilities for colonial adventures undertaken or envisaged by the other party for its own benefit. If the *entente* were seen to involve the latter consequences, it would find few supporters in this country.

By 1905 the effects of the inauguration of the Leopoldian System in the French Congo, despite the desperate attempts of weak-kneed politicians and interested *concessionnaires* to prevent disclosures, became too outrageous for total concealment. The

bulk of the Paris Press had not then been effectively muzzled. Many horrible atrocities perpetrated upon the natives by officials and by agents of the *concessionnaires* found their way into print, and the French Government despatched to the scene one of the finest of men and one of the most experienced of African administrators in the service of France, the man who, without firing a shot, had by methods of persuasiveness, tactfulness, and peace, working almost single-handed, induced the natives of the French Congo to accept the protection of the French flag—Savorgnan de Brazza.

Before leaving Paris, M. de Brazza was the recipient of secret instructions from the French Colonial Office, inspired by the French Foreign Office. The French Government believed at that time, that the British Foreign Office would not be able to resist the growing popular pressure and would provoke an international conference which, it will be remembered, Lord Lansdowne had invited in August, 1903, arising out of the resolution voted by the House of Commons in May. And on the eve, as the French Government thought, of that Conference, to some extent ignorant and uncomprehending of the inevitable accompaniment of the system which a previous Government had authorised, the French Government desired to be placed in a position to assert, on the strength of an inquiry conducted by a personality so distinguished as M. de Brazza, that France had not, in effect, established in her dependency a *régime* comparable with that of the Congo State. The secret instructions ran, in part, as follows:

"1. That the system of land concessions which she has created (*mis en vigueur*) reposes upon principles differing

from those inaugurated in the Congo State; that she has never instituted a domain analogous to that of the 'domaine privé'* of the King, thus avoiding to confuse, in the direct interest of a commercial exploitation conducted by herself, the principles of sovereignty, demesniality (Crown lands) and private property.

"2. That she maintains an army (*force publique*) solely for the purpose of upholding general security, without ever compelling the natives, by various measures of coercion, to enter the service of a commercial, agricultural, or industrial concern.

"3. That she has taken all necessary precautions to allow of third parties † being able to trade freely in the French portion of the conventional basin of the Congo, even in conceded territory.

"4. That she has scrupulously reserved all the customary rights and all the crops of the natives (*cultures vivrières*), even in conceded territory.

"5. That she has always been careful to repress acts of violence committed upon the natives, when brought to the knowledge of the authorities; that these acts have, moreover, always been limited to individuals, without it being possible to see in them an organised system; that the French Congo has never witnessed a whole public or private enterprise having recourse as a principle, in order to maintain itself in being (*pour subsister*) or to hasten its success, to proceedings of methodical tyranny, analogous to those employed in the portion of the Congo State actually forming the object of investigation."

As the outcome of the report which the French Government hoped to receive from its Commissioner on these points of capital importance, *which showed the intimate acquaintance possessed by the French official world of the conditions prevalent in the Congo*

* The old name, now known as "Domaine national," in which is incorporated both the "Domaine privé" and the old "Domaine de la Couronne."

† In the text, "a third party," referring of course, to independent merchants.

State, as far back as 1905, the French Government relied upon being able to go into an international conference with clean hands, boasting the humanity of France, and without venturing to disturb the *concessionnaires'* hornets' nest. And, perhaps, had the man upon whom its choice fell, been a man of another stamp, a man less honest and resolute, less determined in the selection of a picked staff—knowing something of the formidable financial, and political, not to say royal, influences moving behind the scenes—to get at the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, the French Government would have been satisfied in its expectations.

And if such had been the case it is as certain as that to-morrow's sun will rise in the Heavens, that the Congo State would long ere this have been brought to the bar of international judgment.

But de Brazza was not able to reassure the French Government on these points. On the contrary, he felt impelled to tell his Government that France was permitting piracy and murder as an institution under the tricolor; that "liberty, equality, and fraternity" spelt in the French Congo, liberty to rob and to massacre, equality with the Belgian slavers across the river in infamy, fraternity with them in crime against civilisation and humanity. What de Brazza saw in being in the French Congo broke his heart, and hurried him to a premature grave. In one of the letters he wrote to his friends in Paris at the time he said: "*Il ne faut pas que le Congo français devienne une nouvelle Mongalla.** *Nous en avons pris carrément le*

* The Mongalla (*Anversoise*) Trust in the Congo State, notorious for performances of Dantesque horror. See *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* (Heinemann).

chemin." He died on board the steamer on his way home, having lived long enough to complete an exhaustive investigation; but not long enough, alas, or the history of the last few years would have been different, for de Brazza had considerable influence, to rouse the French nation to a sense of the enormities connived at by its Government. De Brazza's last days are described in terms of poignant emotion by M. Challaye, one of the members of his staff:—

"The fate of the Congo troubles him more than his own. When he has the strength to talk, it is of the Congo that he speaks. . . . To another member of the Mission, he expresses his fear lest the Administration, accomplice of the *concessionnaires*, should abandon to their tyranny the miserable population of the Congo. . . . An immense sorrow weighed him down. . . . M. de Brazza passionately loved the Congo; which he had explored and acquired for France, then governed and organised. He suffered to find it in a truly alarming condition. He saw a despotic and avaricious Administration establishing ill-regulated and vexatious taxes, enforcing their payment by proceedings often brutal, frightening the natives from the stations instead of giving them efficacious protection. He saw the *concessionnaire* companies, rapacious and cynical, endeavouring to reconstruct a new slavery, seeking to impose upon the native by threats or violence a badly remunerated labour, instead of attracting them by loyal trade. He knew in all its details the odious story of the Upper Shari; forced porterage, hostage camps, raids and massacres. From these sinister discoveries, M. de Brazza suffered in the deepest recesses of his being. . . . They hastened his end."

The French Government suppressed M. de Brazza's reports and the separate reports of his staff.

The French Government suppressed the report of the Commission it appointed, owing to the momentary clamour aroused in Paris to investigate these reports, although that Commission favoured their publication.

And from that moment French diplomacy opposed with all its strength the re-opening of the Congo State question. Let the reader turn to the attitude of the Foreign Office from 1906 onwards, and draw his conclusions. The French Government has gone on suppressing the reports of its officials ever since. In 1906 and 1907 Monsieur Bobichon, "Special Government Inspector in the concessions," sent numerous reports to the French Colonial Office.* Reporting on the *Compagnie du Fernan Vaz* he says that this Company—

"has gravely compromised in the mind of the natives the confidence in the uprightness and justice of the white man . . . has created amongst the natives a condition of sullen rebellion . . . has treated native labour with arbitrariness and disloyalty . . . has converted its privileges into an instrument of coercion and slavery."

He closes by demanding its suppression for these offences. Reporting on the *Société bretonne du Congo*,† this high official charges the company with maintaining "a fraudulent trade in arms and ammunition." Reporting on the *Compagnie de la Lefini et de N'Keme N'Keni*,‡ he says—

"Native labour, instead of being treated humanely, is treated, on the contrary, with brutality and often with

* "Conclusions du rapport établi par M. Henri Bobichon, Commissaire spécial du Gouvernement près les Sociétés concessionnaires, le 28 Nov., 1906, No. 11."

† *Id.*, No. 19.

‡ *Id.*, 19 Avril, 1907, No. 17.

dishonesty. . . . The monopoly of fact is, in the hands of this Company, converted into an odious weapon . . . . The Company's proceedings are inimical to the Administration."

Reporting on the *Compagnie de la Mobaye*,* he demands its suppression. Reporting on the *Societe de la Haute N'Gounie*,† one of the active persecutors, by the way, of the British merchants, he says—

"The agents of this Company, by their exactions and their brutality have plunged the region into turmoil and rebellion . . . necessitating military operations."

He concludes by demanding its suppression. Of the *Compagnie française du Congo occidental*,‡ M. Bobichon reports—

"It has only been able to secure these profits by violence and by conduct leading to native uprisings. From 1903 to 1906, brutality, imprisonment, pillage, incendiarism of villages, and murder."

He asks for its suppression. Of the *Compagnie des produits et caoutchouc de la Lobaye*,§ M. Bobichon reports—

"Two words characterise the actions of this Company in the last few years; violence going as far as crime, and dishonesty going as far as theft. . . . This increase in the Company's profits, the Company has acquired them in blood. Our silence would make us accomplices in all its crimes and all its thefts. The Administration has the remedy—suppression."

* "Conclusions du rapport établi par M. Henri Bobichon, Commissaire spécial du Gouvernement près les Sociétés concessionnaires, le 30 Avril, 1907, No. 18."

† *Id.*, 12 Mai, 1907, No. 20.

‡ *Id.*, 5 Juin, 1907, No. 21.

§ *Id.*, 25 Juin, 1907, No. 24.

Of the *Société du littoral Bavili* * he reports—

"The author of the Company's report retreats before no subterfuges or even the distortion of truth to justify methods of exploitation which . . . are a perpetual menace to the security of the region occupied, and an obstacle to civilisation."

The French Government has not suppressed any of these slave-driving corporations. The French Government has suppressed all these reports, which are detailed and voluminous.

In February, 1906, a passionate debate took place in the French Chamber of Deputies, when documents relating to the de Brazza mission of an incredible character were produced; women taken prisoners to compel their husbands to furnish rubber and food-stuffs, and left to die of starvation in hostage-houses, natives tortured, etc.; in short, all the usual concomitants of the enforcement of the Leopoldian System. The debate was followed by the issue of new decrees and regulations. The System was left untouched; the *concessionnaires* unmolested. The System remained and its effects continue, causing the gallant but small band of Frenchmen who know the facts to writhe in despair at this prostitution of French honour and humanity.

M. Martineau, then Commissioner-General of the French Congo, in reporting to the French Colonial Office in June, 1907, upon a certain *concessionnaire* company, remarks—

"The administrative details which I possess and will transmit you, suffice to justify administrative

* "Conclusions du rapport établi par M. Henri Bobichon, Commissaire spécial du Gouvernement près les Sociétés concessionnaires, le 25 Juillet, 1907, No. 27.

action, no longer against individuals, but against the Companies themselves which have advised or simply tolerated practices against which humanity protests. . . ."

An American traveller * returned from French Congo about a year ago, writes in June of this year as follows, in the course of a series of articles on the subject :— †

"Who is to blame for the annihilating conditions existing to-day in French Congo? Commerce is dead, towns once prosperous and plentiful are deserted and falling into decay, and whole tribes are being needlessly and ignominiously crushed for the aggrandisement of the few. . . . Towns are sacked and plundered; fathers, brothers, husbands, are put in foul-smelling prisons until those at home can get together the taxes necessary to secure their relief. France has granted exclusive rights to *concessionnaires* who claim everything upon, above, in or about any *hectare* of land described in their grant. . . . To be hurled from active, prosperous freedom into inactive and enforced poverty would demoralise even a civilised country; how farther reaching, then, is it with the savage? . . . As the French say, the entire country is *bouleversé*, *i.e.* overthrown, in confusion, subverted, agitated, unsettled. And the French are right in so naming the result of their own misdeeds. Nothing like it was in the old trading days. All is desolation, demoralisation, annihilation. Native customs are violated; native rights ignored. . . . Great plains which not long since swarmed with the life and bustle of passing trade caravans, are now silent and deserted. Anthills and arid grass and wind-swept paths are the only signs of life upon them."

This account refers, of course, to the maritime zone of the French Congo, where trade with the

* Miss Ida Vera Simonton.
† *African Mail.*

white man had existed for three centuries until destroyed by the Leopoldian System.

Similar reports are continually reaching me from the British traders left in the maritime zone, who appear to be "hanging on," doing little or no business, in the hope that the concession system will collapse in time through its own inherent vices. Fighting between Government troops and the natives is frequent, and in many parts, the writers say, the country has been abandoned by its former inhabitants.

Monstrous and abominable outrages are the order of the day in French Congo, especially in the upper parts—Ubanghi, Sangha, M'Poko—whence most of the rubber and ivory now comes.

"We are on the eve—writes M. Pierre Mille—of far greater revelations than those which have come before." * And this must be, for the evil increases by the force of its own propulsion. The higher officials, at least many of them, are good men, and seek as far as they can to stem the tide of atrocity which the system everywhere engenders and must engender. But they are in an impossible position. Like de Brazza, like the members of his staff, like the Government inspectors, like every single individual who tries to restore order out of sanguinary chaos; no sooner do their reforming tendencies become known by the *concessionnaire* companies in Paris through their agents on the spot, than the financial interests concerned renew the game of intimidation and virtual blackmail in the French Colonial Office, and the reforming official must bow or go. This, of course, is notorious in French colonial circles. I advise any

* July, 1909.

Englishman who doubts it, to read the debate in the Chamber of Deputies alluded to;* or to communicate with the French League for the protection of the rights of the Congo natives.

I am naturally precluded from speaking of my interview this year with the French Colonial Minister because it was a private one. It lasted an hour and half and was one of the most remarkable personal experiences in the course of a struggle of ten years against the Leopoldian System, which has contained many curious ones. But since my friend Pierre Mille has already affirmed it in public, I can corroborate him in this respect, that the pigeon holes of the French Colonial Office are bursting with reports of an atrocious character—unless they have recently been destroyed, which is possible, for everything is possible in this inconceivable conspiracy to maintain on both banks of the Congo a System of slavery, which, in its extent and in the permanence of its horrors, rivals the old over-sea slave traffic, as it by far exceeds that traffic in the destruction of human life and natural resources it is producing.

Indeed, so inconvenient has the French Colonial Office found the Board of Inspectors it appointed to "control" the *concessionnaires*, that it has now issued a decree suppressing them, thus entirely fulfilling de Brazza's prophecy in 1905. The French Government which permits this infamy and whose local Administration benefits to the extent of 15 per cent. from the profits of the *concessionnaires*, no more dare reveal the number of white men who have been had up before the Brazzaville Court for atrocities upon natives in the last three years, than

* Appendix.

it dare publish the reports it has received in that period thanks to the efforts of a handful of officials, honest *malgré tout.* And all the trials before the Court end in farce. The *concessionnaires'* black soldiers alone are punished—following the practice of the Congo State. The European agents of the *concessionnaire* companies are either let off or condemned to *peines dérisoires.* It could not be otherwise under the circumstances. The System corrodes everything. It would corrupt the archangel Gabriel. The magistrates cannot deal effectively with offenders, unless they are black, and the real culprits are not the wretched offscourings who, sent out on a miserable pittance, made to sign a scandalous form of agreement, paid on the amount of rubber and ivory they send home do but carry out their instructions; but the wealthy scoundrels who live in luxury in Brussels, Paris and Antwerp.

There are few more competent African experts than Auguste Chevalier, whose studies of African flora are known throughout the scientific world. I cull the following short extracts from his magnificent and monumental volume, *L'Afrique centrale française*:—*

"Soon, if this policy is persisted in, if the incendiarism and pillage of villages does not stop, if the *concessionnaires* are always to be empowered to impose such and such a *corvée* upon the inhabitants, and place an embargo upon all that the latter possess including even domestic animals, on the plea that they are "produce of the soil," the banks of the Congo, Ubanghi and Sangha will be completely deserted, and the quantity of

* 1908. See Appendix. Chevalier is *Docteur-ès-Sciènces* and *Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur.*

produce drawn from this rich country, already very small, will decrease until it has disappeared. . . . Half a century from now will see the total disappearance of these hard working peoples: the desert will take possession of French Central Africa."

God! What a tragedy it is. What a foul and hideous tragedy. What a nightmare of human greed, human folly, human wickedness. What a sardonic satire upon our "civilisation." What a reflection upon the "statesmanship" of the Western world.

And what are the reasons of it all so far as the French Congo is concerned? I have given the reasons, initial error, political cowardice, and the slime of the financial vampire.

Can it be France which is perpetrating this thing, plagiarising the work of Leopold africanus? No, it is not France. It is a group of French and Belgian financiers (the capital of many of the French *concessionnaire* companies is chiefly Belgian, and the shares of such of them as are dealt with actively are regularly quoted on the Antwerp stock exchange, long articles appearing on their prospects at frequent intervals in the Belgian financial Press, which deals with "colonial" affairs), a group which has evolved from, and seen its opportunity in the impunity with which King Leopold has been allowed to re-establish an African trade in slave labour, of reaping large profits in a short space of time. Its members have increased and grown bolder in the measure in which the King of the Belgians has triumphed. They have witnessed his successful defiance of Public Opinion; they have helped him to superimpose his System upon the French Congo; they have helped him to force

it upon the Belgian people—thanks to the supineness of the British Foreign Office.

No, it is not France. It is the controlling influence of this powerful financial syndicate over the French Press, and over the French Government departments. It is the fear of successive French holders of office lest an abominable scandal should be let loose, and who, like the ostrich, thrust their heads in the sands of silence, hoping thus to keep back the light of truth from bursting forth at least during their own ephemeral tenure. It is the poltroonery of successive French Governments to face the *concessionnaire* companies who threaten, if they are interfered with, to bring actions at law, to the tune of several millions of pounds sterling, for breach of contract against any French Government which has the temerity to tackle them resolutely, although they themselves have violated the terms of their charters by decimating and enslaving the natives, and although the French Government's own officials are constantly reminding it that the remedy lies in its own hands, on this very ground.

No, it is not France, but it is that cancer of corruption, and of financial jobbery, which is eating into the political life, and into almost every branch of the administrative service of one of the bravest and most industrious peoples in the world: silently but swiftly undermining the national edifice.

Now, as I have remarked before, we are not, as a nation, responsible for the French Congo; although we cannot but be affected, in our sentiments, by the actions of our partner in the *entente cordiale*. We are responsible, very largely responsible, for the conditions of the Congo State, and the

nation should apply itself seriously to the task of ascertaining how far the conditions of the French Congo may have been, and may be (arising out of our *entente* with France), the explanation of the story of the Foreign Office's handling of King Leopold and his Ministers under two British Governments.

It must have been made clear by what precedes that if Britain forces, by definite action, the Congo question before an international conference, the problem of the French Congo will automatically arise. It must have been made clear by what precedes ; first that a number of humane and clear-sighted Frenchmen—by no means belonging to what we should term here the professionally philanthropic school—desire that Britain should take vigorous steps with this intent as by that means and by that means alone, do they foresee the possibility of a reversal of the existing policy in that French dependency which sullies the fair fame of France. And if it has not been made clear, I am in a position to affirm, that perhaps, a larger number of Frenchmen are beginning to see in an international conference, the only way of escape from an intolerable and untenable situation, which must, sooner or later, break out into a scandal even more terrible for France than the Dreyfus affair. It must at the same time be obvious to those who have done me the honour of perusing these pages, that the French Foreign Office and the French official machinery generally, is opposed to a conference for the very reasons which make such an event desirable and necessary in the eyes of others.

I would also ask the Public to observe that

French diplomacy has given us no help in this matter. So much is patent from Sir Edward Grey's speeches in Parliament, and from the fact that France hastened to recognise the Belgian annexation of the Congo, without even making the reserves formulated by Germany as to Belgium's adherence to the Berlin Act.

But has French diplomacy confined itself to giving us no help? A contrary conviction is deducible from the very events here narrated. The mere fact of France recognising the Transfer, and Britain declining to do so, argues a great deal more than a disinclination to *support* British diplomacy, as, for example, British diplomacy has supported France in the Morocco affair.

Under these circumstances it would seem that the British people are faced with an issue, simple in itself, but one which pierces right down to the foundations of national policy.

Is the retention of their moral independence in international affairs, their freedom to carry out the obligations of honour they have contracted, their liberty to fulfil the dictates of conscience and of duty in a matter which "far transcends all questions of contemporary politics" * to be subordinated to any engagement their Government has contracted with a Continental Power—in the concrete, to the *entente* with France?

If so, they have, indeed, entered upon a path which must have profound effects for ill upon the national character, ultimately endangering the security of the State.

E. D. Morel.

August, 1909.

* The Archbishop of Canterbury in the House of Lords, February, 1908.

APPENDIX I

THE TREATY OF TRANSFER (WITH NOTES)

Traité de Cession de l'Etat indépendant du Congo à la Belgique.

Le Roi-Souverain du Congo ayant fait connaître, dans sa lettre du 5 Août 1899 à M. le Ministre des Finances de Belgique que, s'il convenait à la Belgique de contracter, avant le terme prévu, des liens plus étroits avec Ses possessions du Congo, Sa Majesté n' hésiterait pas à les mettre à sa disposition; et les deux Hautes Parties s'étant trouvées d'accord pour réaliser dès à présent cette cession.

Le traité suivant a été conclu entre l'Etat belge, représenté par M. Julien Davignon, Ministre des Affaires étrangères, M. Jules de Trooz, Ministre de l'Intérieur, M. Jules Renkin, Ministre de la Justice, M. Julien Liebaert, Ministre des Finances, le Baron Descamps, Ministre des Sciences et des Arts, M. Armand Hubert, Ministre de l'Industrie et du Travail, M. Auguste Delbeke, Ministre des Travaux publics, M. Georges Helleputte, Ministre des Chemins de fer, Postes et Telegraphes, chargé provisoirement du portefuille de l'Agriculture, et le Lieutenant-General Joseph Hellebaut, Ministre de la Guerre, agissant sous réserve de l'approbation de la Législature.

Et l'Etat Indépendant du Congo, représenté par le Chevalier de Cuvelier, Secrétaire Général du Département des Affaires Etrangères, M. Hubert Droogmans, Secrétaire Général du Département des Finances, et M. Charles Liebrechts, Secrétaire Général du Département de l'Intérieur.

ARTICLE PREMIER.

Sa Majesté le roi Souverain déclare céder à la Belgique la souveraineté des territories composant l'Etat Indépendant du Congo avec tous les droits et obligations qui y sont attachés. L'Etat belge déclare accepter cette cession, prendre et faire siennes les obligations de l'Etat Indépendant du Congo telles qu'elles sont détaillées en l'annexe A, et s'engage à respecter les fondations* existantes au Congo, ainsi que les droits acquis légalement reconnus des tiers, indigènes et non-indigènes.

ARTICLE 2.

La cession comprend tout l'avoir immobilier et mobilier de l'Etat Indépendant, et notamment:

1. La propriété de toutes les terres appartenant à son domaine public ou privé, sous réserve des dispositions et obligations indiquées dans l'annexe A de la présente convention;

2. Toutes actions, obligations, parts de fondateur ou d'intérêt dont il est fait mention à l'annexe B;

3. Tous les bâtiments, constructions, installations, plantations et appropriations quelconques établis ou acquis en Afrique et en Belgique par le Gouvernment de l'Etat Indépendant, les objets mobiliers de toute nature et le bétail qu'il y possède; ainsi que ses bateaux et embarcations avec leur materiel, et son matériel d'armement militaire, † tels que repris a l'annexe B, Nos. 2 et 4;

4. L'ivoire, le caoutchouc et les autres produits africains qui sont la propriété de l'Etat Indépendant, ‡ de même

* Modified by the Traité additionnel as regards the Domaine de la Couronne.

† Comprising 25,534 Albini rifles with bayonets; 694 Mauser rifles; 4,000,0000 ball cartridges, *albini;* 1,000,000 blank cartridges, *albini;* 1,600,000 caps for ball cartridge; 150,000 ball cartridges, *mauser;* 100,000 ball cartridges, *browning;* and 185 *cannons of various types, including* 42 75-*millimetre Krupps,* 13 *Nordenfelts* (*of* 57 *millimetres*) *and* 62 *Nordenfelts of* 47 *millimetres*—a fair equipment for a philanthropic enterprise!

‡ Including 120 tons of ivory, 600 tons of rubber, and 200 tons of

que les objets d'approvisionnement, et autres marchandises lui appartenant, tels que repris, à l'annexe B Nos. 1 et 3.

ARTICLE 3.

D'autre part la cession comprend tout le passif et tous les engagements financiers de l'Etat Indépendant, tels qu'ils sont détaillés dans l'annexe C.

ARTICLE 4.

La date à laquelle la Belgique assumera l'exercice de son droit de souveraineté sur les territoires visés à l'article I^er sera determinée par arrêté royal.

Les recettes faites et les dépensee éffectueés par l'Etat Indépendant à partir du I^er janvier 1908 seront au compte de la Belgique.

En foi de quoi les plénipotentiaires respectifs ont signé le présent traité et y ont apposé leur cachet.

Fait en double expédition à Bruxelles, le 28 novembre 1907.

(L.S.) J. DAVIGON. ARM HUBERT.
J. DE TROOZ. A. DELBEKE
J. RENKIN. G. HELLEPUTTE.
J. LIEBAERT. GENERAL HELLEBAUT.
BON DESCAMPS. CHEVALIER DE CUVELIER.
H. DROOGMANS-LIEBRECHTS.

gum copal. Note the word "Property." The whole Leopoldian System is revealed in this paragraph of Article 2.

APPENDIX II

ANGLO-AMERICAN CO-OPERATION

RESOLUTION voted by the Executive Committee of the Congo Reform Association, July 7, 1909 :—

"The Executive Committee of the Association has seriously considered the White Paper, Africa No. 2, 1909, containing the Belgian despatch on Congo affairs, dated March 15th, and the British reply, dated June 11th. The Committee desires to point out that the statement of facts in the Foreign Secretary's reply affords the most authoritative confirmation of the Association's contention that annexation has hitherto brought no mitigation or alteration, much less abolition, of the horrible system against which the Association exists to protest. But the Association has to consider the Foreign Secretary's reply in relation to the despatch which it answers, and in that connexion cannot but regard it as profoundly disappointing. The Association has never shown or felt any hostility to Belgium, but it is obliged to say that it would be difficult to conceive a document more calculated to prove that the present Government of Belgium treats with complete indifference the British representations, and has no real intention to alter the present system. Yet the despatch indicates no policy on the part of His Majesty's Government other than a mere refusal to recognise annexation. The Association has hitherto given unswerving support to His Majesty's Government in the belief that His Majesty's Government would not tolerate the perpetuation by the Belgian Government of the system of slavery set up in the Congo territory which they declared

(February, 1908) must disappear as a 'condition precedent to any transfer of the Congo to another territory.' His Majesty's Government have, during the last three years, with the full approval of public opinion, committed this country to definite action, if verbal representations failed to alter the existing state of affairs. Thus, on November 20, 1906, the Foreign Secretary declared that, 'In any case, whatever the views of other Powers may be, it will be impossible for us to recognise indefinitely the present state of things,' while on February 26, 1908, Sir Edward Grey expressly declined to place 'any limitations' upon the right of this country to take isolated action, and expressly stated that he was prepared to take such action 'on behalf of British Treaty Rights.'

"While contending that any retreat from the position previously assumed by His Majesty's Government would be a grave loss of honour to this country, the Association expresses its belief that the co-operation of the United States of America in the action foreshadowed by the Foreign Secretary in his previous speech can be secured. The Association, taking note of the Foreign Secretary's willingness 'to co-operate in any procedure which the United States are willing to adopt,' as stated in the House of Commons on February 25 last, is of opinion that direct proposals should be made to the American Government by the Government of His Majesty in view of the fact that the United States Government, although the first Government to recognise King Leopold's African enterprise, did not ratify the Berlin Act. The Association urges His Majesty's Government to obtain the co-operation of the American Government, hitherto freely given, in a joint declaration to the world that the system set up in the Congo is a violation of the law of nations, a revival of slavery, and an infringement of the British and American Treaties of 1884, and can no longer be tolerated. The Association urges such joint declaration as a preliminary step to definite action under the British and American Treaties. The Association believes that the risks attending the perpetuation of

the state of affairs under which Belgium is maintaining a Slave State in Central Africa, infringing Treaties with every Power in Europe and erecting illegal monopolies, are much greater than any involved in decided action. The Association contends that this country is committed to go forward, not only out of regard to its honour and historical responsibilities, but as the outcome of the declarations and general attitude of His Majesty's Government."

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APPENDIX III

PUBLICATIONS REFERRED TO (*INTER ALIA*) IN PART III.

OFFICIAL organ of the Congo Reform Association, 1904–09. (These include the reproduction of Hansard, Congo debates, 1903–09; public correspondence with Foreign Office, etc.)

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APPENDIX IV

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APPENDIX V

EXTRACT from King Leopold's speech at Antwerp on June 12, 1909 :—

"Belgians have reached the summit of a great industrial expansion. . . . They need a merchant marine. That is only possible if capital is forthcoming by some means or another. Belgium, in this respect, has been wise to acquire a colony, whence she will draw fresh sources of wealth. . . . There is a vast field for Belgian enterprise in China, in South America, in the near East. But Belgium will need special sources of wealth to allow of the founding by her in those countries of commercial and financial companies. . . . Let us assist our compatriots in the colony by establishing plantations and mines whence they will derive the indispensable financial resources to fertilise their efforts abroad. The nation is rich enough to bear the expenses necessary to ensure its prosperity, but the nation is able, now that it possesses the Congo, to draw therefrom additional revenues to develop and guarantee its position. If these vast Congo territories, many of which as yet unoccupied and unproductive, were exploited would they not furnish us with the resources required for many things? The Colonial Law provides that the product of customs receipts and taxes shall be exclusively devoted to the needs of the colony. But apart from these budgetary resources, is the nation not free to give to its sons the right of obtaining from the lands as yet unappropriated and from the mines as yet untapped, the resources which will increase the openings available to their activity? Thus without calling upon the taxpayer, revenues can be secured from the Congo's virgin

soil. Why should not lands and mines in the Congo be attributed to the promoters of Banks in the Far East, of founders of Belgian Steamship Companies? Revenues drawn from the Congo would thus relieve the Chambers in facing the necessities of national expenditure. Is it not legitimate that the unworked lands of the Congo should contribute to ensure our general prosperity? If we desire that our colony shall enrich the Belgian working man we must leave none of its riches untapped.

'Gentlemen, if the people of Antwerp will take up this task, I am convinced that the results will be brilliant. The greatest satisfaction of my life has been to give the Congo to Belgium. (Loud applause.) The Congo is richer than you think. The duty of a Sovereign is to enrich the nation. *Vive* the prosperity of Antwerp!"

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